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## **A Reported Change in Religion**



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# A Reported Change in Religion

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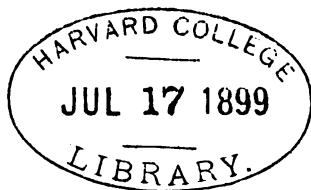
LONDON  
EDWARD ARNOLD  
Publisher to the India Office  
37 BEDFORD STREET  
1899



~~III. 9373~~

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Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.  
At the Ballantyne Press

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*“War is the effort made by all towards peace”*

—MONTESQUIEU

## A Reported Change in Religion

9<sup>n</sup>  
THE well-known BERTRAM BEVOR had for some time been travelling in Italy, and as his movements were uncertain and dictated by no principle, he had directed that his letters and newspapers, forwarded from England, should be sent to a hotel at Florence, where he intended to make some stay. Thus, on the afternoon when he arrived here, he found a pile of letters, larger, however, than he had expected as the result of ten days' interval. Rather alarmed by the sight, he began, when he had settled himself in an arm-chair, by taking up a copy of the *Times*, which proved to be nearly two weeks old, and he glanced down the columns.

▲

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His eye was suddenly arrested by a note at the bottom of a page:—

“We are informed that Mr. Bertram Bevor, of Denham Court, in Berkshire, has been received into the Roman Catholic Church. Mr. Bevor is a nephew of the Earl of Cumnor, and was formerly in the Diplomatic Service.”

When the hero of this announcement had partly recovered from the surprise which it caused him, he looked again at the pile of letters, and said to himself, “Perhaps this accounts for their number.” He looked at the outside of each, put one aside to read last, and began to peruse the rest.

Bertram Bevor first opened a letter which he read with some conscious effort, since he had no great affection for the writer. It was from his cousin, the Honourable and Reverend John Bevor, second son of the Earl of Cumnor, and Rector of Cowslip Rectory, not far from Cumnor Castle, in the county of Oxford. John and Bertram were very nearly of the same age, had been thrown together much as children,

had been at school and college together, and had, since that time, met as seldom as Bertram could manage.

In their childhood, boyhood, and youth, they had never met save to disagree, since they differed in tastes, opinion, and temperament. Bertram Bevor was by disposition easy, tolerant, glad to know people of differing characters, and inclined to weigh impartially varying views and opinions. He was also disposed, perhaps too much, to seek for adventures and try various paths in life. He desired not to influence and teach others, but to know them, and, in his constant effort to realise to himself and image forth the nature and feelings of those with whom he came into contact, he really had acquired a great power of discernment of character and motives by means of very slight external indications. One result of this observant habit was that he usually left upon people with whom he talked, or rather to whom he listened, the impression that he agreed with them, whereas his real tendency was towards



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criticism and disagreement. This was a source of an opinion which arose concerning him, that he was inconsistent or not serious, merely amusing himself with ideas. He observed himself as closely as others, and could spend hours by the fire recalling past scenes and actions in which he had taken part, and playing them over again in imagination with possible variations, which had not happened, and the results of these, much after the fashion of the meditations of a chess-player. He was so much in the habit of thus watching himself, detached from himself, that he did, doubtless, weaken the springs of action, and disqualified himself also for systematic thought upon abstract subjects.

In all these ways Bertram showed himself to be no true Bevor. He derived much the larger part of his character from his mother, who came partly of Irish blood.

His cousin John, on the contrary, represented the Bevor disposition in its purity. The family was of unmingled English descent. It had

therefore little or no poetry or imagination. Since the time when, two or three centuries earlier, the Bevors had been Midland yeomen, they had risen by a series of marriages, invariably made with a view to the increase of property, and with never a touch of romance. In the Civil War one ancestor had taken cautious part with the Presbyterian party, and after the Revolution the family had been steadily Hanoverian and Whig, until the outbreak of the French Revolution, when it became Tory. It had, since the Reform Bill, remained consistently Conservative. Lord Cumnor, the third Earl, the father of John Bevor, a dull, rather pompous, but extremely worthy man, had, though otherwise fairly prosperous, suffered throughout life under two dispensations, between which he perceived a close connection—the career of Mr. Gladstone, and the extension and increase of the ritualistic party in the Church. This last fact was not only a theoretical but a practical inconvenience to him, because, whereas, when he first came into

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his estates, he could walk to a church across his own park in a quarter of an hour, he now had to drive for four miles before he could reach a church at which he felt conscientiously able to attend. It is true that Cowslip Rectory, of which his son John was rector, was nearer, but with John, since his rectorship began, Lord Cumnor had hopelessly quarrelled on matters both of doctrine and ceremonial. Cowslip was the only living, as it happened, in Lord Cumnor's gift, and he had conferred it upon John before the rapid process had begun by which an evangelically minded curate was turned into a strong maintainer of the sacerdotal claim and practice. Lord Cumnor, like many another patron, now knew something of the feeling of Henry II. towards Becket. John, from his childhood up, had always thrown himself with concentrated vigour into the pursuit in hand. His mind was not manifold, not reflective, not self-interested or self-conscious. It was limited, applied to external work, not observant of other people, their tastes, wishes,

or characters. In the way of academic study his natural bias had been towards mathematics and mechanics, but he was fond of music and knew much about it. In poetry he most liked to read Browning, but did not, in fact, care to read poetry at all. It had always irritated Bertram Bevor that John should discuss literature, or politics, or the characters of men, because the reflections made by his cousin never seemed to belong to him, but to be taken straight and untransformed from some authority. John had a good memory and no humour, and in their Oxford circle seemed to take special pleasure in crushing with an authority or a fact each light and paradoxical position taken up by Bertram.

When John, five or six years after he had taken Orders, had passed decidedly into the ranks of the "advanced" clergy of the High Church school, both his natural virtues, and (as they seemed to Bertram) his natural faults, were intensified by the influence of a strong profession. His practical and organising genius

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shone forth in the management of his parish. His intellect accepted as a whole, like a book of Euclid, the "Anglo-Catholic" theory. He felt not the slightest doubt, was immovable upon every point, and would gladly and bravely have died, if necessary, for each of them. In these mild days he had suffered for conscience' sake by losing his father's affection and damaging his testamentary prospects.

But the sacerdotal idea, which assumes so attractive a form when it exhibits itself in a poetic personality, adding, as it were, strength to grace, or style to natural beauty, did, when apparent in the prosaic and mathematical mind of John Bevor, rather repel than excite sympathy. Contact with him was apt to stir up any slumbering Protestant feeling in some minds, any latent tendencies towards Rome in others; always a spirit of contradiction. This was his letter:—

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COWELIP RECTORY, OXFORDSHIRE,  
25th April 1898.

MY DEAR BERTRAM,

I am greatly grieved to read in the *Times* that you have joined the schismatic Roman Church. I call it schismatic, because in England there is but one branch of the Catholic Church to which has been given divine authority to teach and to administer the sacraments. I mean, of course, the Church in which you were born and educated. I need not tell you that the visible Catholic Church consists of all those who belong to the great society held together by the apostolical succession, handed down through bishops, and by the true doctrine and administration of the sacraments. So far it matters not whether they are born in the Anglican, the Greek, or the Latin branch of the Church. You may say then, "Why should I not belong to the Latin branch in preference to the Anglican branch of the Catholic Church?" I reply, for two reasons: first, because as I have said, you are, as a born Englishman, bound to the obedience of this branch to which exclusive authority has been given by

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God within the provinces of Canterbury and York; secondly, because the Roman Church is not only (within those limits) schismatical, but because she is everywhere heretical. How, you ask, is Rome heretical? I reply that Rome is heretical on this point, her claim to be the one true visible Catholic Church. Apart from this cardinal point, I myself accept, save for a few details, the whole cycle of doctrine held by the Church of Rome, and, as you know, I have introduced in my own church, in the face of much obloquy, much of the ritual and discipline which were once deemed, erroneously, to be exclusively Roman. But the great heresy of Rome, consisting in her exclusive claim, and her repudiation of the Church of England as a branch of the Catholic Church, should place an impassable barrier between her and any one who is a son of the Anglican Church. I, like all good Catholics, desire, of course, to see restored the visible intercommunion of all branches of the Church. It may be that some day Rome will acknowledge, and crave forgiveness for, her great and terrible heresy. It will then be for us to consider upon what terms we

can receive back the penitent into communion. Until then there is nothing to be done, so far as Rome is concerned, but to wait patiently until she shall have been restored to her right mind; and this, I fear, can hardly take place except by a miraculous interposition.

If we had both been living fifty years ago, before the trumpet, first sounded at Oxford, had fully wakened up our sleeping Church, I could have better understood, although I should not even then have approved of your step. Although the Church of England then, as always, was, by virtue of the apostolic succession, an integral portion of the Catholic Church, her lax practice and the Erastian spirit of her rulers, lent, alas, much colour to the argument of her adversaries that she was Catholic on paper or in theory only. But now she recognises her full glorious heritage. In thousands of churches the symbolic rites in the celebration of the Eucharist set forth boldly her true belief in the real Objective Presence of Our Lord's Body beneath the veil of the elements on the altar. The good done by the Reformers in casting off the usurpation of the Roman



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See remains; their Non-Catholic doctrines and practices are being rapidly eliminated. The Church of England will, before many years, be purged throughout, and appear in her true nature, Catholic *and* National; nay, more than National, for we shall see the federation of the free Catholics of the English race throughout the world. In exchange for this glorious prospect you allow yourself to become a member of the Latin Church, withering and dying under the papal tyranny, and (in England) schismatic, alien, and offending against the Christian law of unity. To this, I fear, you have been led by those weaknesses in your character, long observed and deplored by me, which make you peculiarly open to seduction of all kinds. Ever since boyhood I have seen in you a want of firm conviction and principle, a restless and dissatisfied disposition, an inclination to listen to and investigate views and opinions which you should have rejected at first sight as unsound, an impatience with existing facts and institutions, a romantic propensity towards the unknown and untried; in short, every mark of an unsettled and unstable character.

A romantic disposition is encouraged by the poets by whom you were too much influenced, but I have heard it very truly defined as a "compound of sensual desire and intellectual curiosity," originating therefore with our great Adversary, and consisting altogether of the nature of concupiscence. Forgive my outspokenness; it is, I feel, my duty, as your cousin and as a priest in the Holy Catholic Church, to undeceive you as to the true motives of your action. It may be too late to retrace your steps, but when your present erroneous desire finds that it will receive no true satisfaction, your motives will be seen by you to be what they were.

I am therefore, my dear Bertram, forced to the conclusion that you have been led into what is in every sense a most serious error. This, I think, you will see when the glamour exercised by the Roman Church has passed away, and you will then repent the rash resolution by which you have joined an heretical, and (in England and Wales) schismatic, body.

It is, of course, impossible that no modification should take place in the relations between you

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and me. Your action has placed a deep and wide gulf between us. We no longer belong to the same Communion. But I trust that you will believe that I still regard you with affection, and am still willing to maintain such relations with you as may be possible in these sadly altered circumstances.—I remain, your affectionate cousin,

JOHN BEVOR.

The next letter which Bertram took up bore the arms of his uncle, Lord Cumnor :—

CUMNOR CASTLE, OXFORDSHIRE,  
26th April 1898.

DEAR BERTRAM,

I am exceedingly sorry to hear of the step which you have taken. I am not altogether surprised—though in you I did not expect it—because I have long considered that all these ritualistic developments in the Church of England must logically lead the consistent minds among those who thus play with fire, into the complete Romanist errors. I have said this over and over again to your cousin, my son John,

when expressing my disapproval of the pernicious innovations which he has introduced, against my express wishes, at Cowslip, and I wish, though I hardly hope, that your defection may be a lesson and a warning to him. What is to be expected, as I have so often told him, when English clergymen introduce the most objectionable characteristics of altar sacrificial worship, and both in teaching and forms inculcate, contrary to the express prohibition of their Church, what is practically the idolatrous doctrine of transubstantiation? Individuals in their congregations become habituated to all this, so that they cannot do without it; then, after a time, perceive that these are not truly the doctrines of the Reformed Church of England, or of the nation at large, and rather than abandon them, join the Church of Rome.

I fail to understand, however, how you, whom I always took to be a man of independence of thought, and knowledge of the world, have been able to submit yourself to priestly control, to accept ridiculous superstitions, and to join a foreign Church. It is, in my opinion, as if you had chosen, without any valid reason, to

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naturalise yourself as a Frenchman or Italian. Indeed it is worse, because in this case you not only abandon your own country, but you deliberately accept what is obviously untrue. I have the gravest doubts, moreover, whether a man who accepts the infallibility of the Pope can possibly be a good subject of the Queen, and certainly, whether this be so or not, he will find great difficulties in his way if he wishes either, as you might reasonably have done, to enter the House of Commons, or to obtain any important office of trust. You can hardly expect either electors or the Government to feel any confidence in a man who has placed his conscience under the control of priests who are themselves subject to a foreign potentate. I can have no doubt, looking at the condition of other countries, that a great increase of Romanism and Ritualism would utterly destroy the national character and qualities to which British prosperity and Empire is due. I am obliged to add that I myself shall not in future be able to invite you to Cumnor Castle. It would not be consistent with my position to show any countenance to Romanism, nor should I feel that I could safely allow you to have

any intercourse with your cousins, my daughters. Margaret is already too much inclined to be influenced by her brother John, and I have on several occasions been obliged to warn her of the inevitable tendency towards Rome of those who once allow themselves to depart from the firm and solid principles of the English Reformation.—Believe me, yours sincerely,

CUMNOR.

*P.S.*—I need not tell you how much pain your conduct has given to your aunt.

Another letter, in a family handwriting, was from his pretty cousin Lady Margaret Bevor, a girl of twenty-two, who was lively, active, inclined to roam from the beaten paths, and lived in a state of continual suppressed revolt against the aridity of ideas and the dull routine of the solemn life which reigned both at Cumnor Castle and in the social circle to which her parents belonged when in London. The visits of her cousin Bertram seemed to her to be the only window in her life through which she

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could breathe fresher and freer air, and see dimly into a larger world.

CUMNOR CASTLE,  
26th April.

DEAR BERTRAM,

I see by a letter on the hall table that father has been writing to you—severely, no doubt; I can so easily guess the kind of thing. I hasten to write before he has solemnly announced, which I expect he will do after breakfast to-morrow—we always have solemn announcements after breakfast—that we are never to write to you again. In this way I avoid the sin of disobedience. But what *am* I to say to you? I feel at once alarmed and pleased that you should have had the courage to take a step like this, if your conscience commanded it. I do so adore moral courage, even if the cause for which it is exerted is a wrong one. And who can tell whether it is right or wrong to become a Roman Catholic? If, as John says, there is very little fault to be found with their doctrines or services, except in their claiming to be the one true Catholic Church,

it surely cannot be *wicked*, at all events, to join them. And I have read of such good and holy men who were Roman Catholics—François de Sales, and Fénelon, and Cardinal Newman. If one feels, after reading and thinking and praying, steadily drawn towards a Church which one knows to have been accepted and loved by such saints, can it be *wicked* to surrender oneself to that directing? I know that when I went once or twice, without any one knowing, with Philippa Wentworth, to that beautiful little convent church in London, and heard the lovely singing of the nuns, and saw how devout they looked, and how real it all seemed to be, I felt a great attraction. But I feel that I have too little mind and knowledge to be able to judge, and of course one might be led wrong if one trusted to instinct alone.

I am afraid that my father will never forgive you; he has been so angry of late about Ritualism and John's services at Cowslip, which are getting worse and worse. Something in John specially irritates him. I think it is that John is very like him in character, but has taken up diametrically opposite opinions. I



fear that he will never allow us to have you here again, at any rate for some years, but perhaps we shall be able to meet elsewhere. Mamma has been almost silent about it, but I can see that she is much vexed also. She hates anything which brings trouble into the family, and makes his lordship out of temper. If you write, post your letter so as to reach me in the afternoon. Then no one will see it arrive except me.—Ever, dear Bertram, your affectionate cousin,

MARGARET.

Bertram Bevor, when he was at Oxford, had been noted for the many-sidedness of his acquaintance. He had maintained touch, to the detriment of his success in the schools, both with the fashionable youth of Christ Church and the intellectual set at Balliol. His chief acquaintance among the latter was a hard-headed undergraduate from the north of England, by name Courtenay Benson, who, after he had taken a high degree, remained at Oxford and adopted the academic career. He

was a cheerful, vigorous, contented man, seeing things clearly and distinctly, and not troubled by doubts or hesitations. His was the hearty and positive temper which is necessary if happiness is to be obtained in the profession of learning and teaching. Benson had no doubt at all as to the value of any specific branch of knowledge. He was not, however, a student by nature, and would have done well, through concentration of purpose, in any career which he might have chosen. He was not one of those rather rare teachers who take original points of view, but excelled in abstracting, and presenting in concise form existing ideas and theories. His special line at Oxford was that of Political Economy. His letter ran thus:—

BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD,

*27th April 1898.*

MY DEAR BEVOR,

It is true that I have not seen very much of you (to my regret) during the last few years, and you may have undergone

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a more rapid process of change, or, as I should call it, disintegration, than I knew. But I certainly should never have anticipated, from what I knew of you in old Oxford days, and subsequently, that you would ever have allowed yourself to take the retrograde step of which I saw yesterday a notice in the *Times*.

When we were together at Oxford we were, I thought, agreed, that whatever might be the undiscovered and probably undiscoverable truth about the nature and final causes of existence, the Christian religion in any of its forms was an attempt to formulate this truth which the wiser and more advanced portion of the European races had as much outgrown as a man has outgrown his boyish clothes. We were both, as I supposed, so convinced of this, that although we discussed most things, we never once, so far as I can recollect, ever discussed the comparative claims of Catholicism and Protestantism. I know that you continued to attend chapel, at least when you felt in the mood to do so, whereas I considered that one ought not even to appear to accept the Christian dogmatic theology. However, I have never felt any

strong objection to Church of England services. On the whole, Anglicanism is a vague and loose general expression of religious desires and aspirations, and so long as a man keeps carefully aloof from the sacerdotal section of that Church, he does not by attending its services do himself much harm, or commit himself to any rigid and exclusive view of the universe. Every one is aware that the Church of England is not a self-ruling association, but is only the religious side of the national institutions, and that its doctrines are open to eventual change and development. Its face is, I consider, turned in the right direction. I am indeed quite willing to support the established Church as the best barrier which present circumstances allow against the inroads of really dangerous superstition. But the Church of Rome is a wholly different matter. This Church makes the attempt to subjugate the free opinion to the control of an independent theocracy or spiritual power, centred at Rome, and restricting to the paths which it chooses to mark out the march of the human intellect. It is a real, distinct power, a rival and foe in every country to the State, which

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does, or should, guide the education of each nation by the light of reason in its latest and highest stage of development. History, philosophy, economics, ethics, even natural science, are all taught by the Catholic Church, not with a view to truth, but to suit its own present interests or preconceived ideas fossilised in an earlier stage of intellectual evolution. The triumph of this Church—it is really almost too obvious a thing to write down—would mean the arrest of the course of development of the European races. The energy which might have made of them a magnificent tree, so to speak, would waste itself in contortion and disease. Artificial restrictions of natural growth always have the same results, whether the subject is a baby, a plant, a nation, or an intellectual or moral civilisation. Only in freedom, whether in political or religious matters, lies salvation; the work of government should merely consist in pruning away of excrescences, watering, manuring, or hoeing.

I thought that you and I were agreed at Oxford that, so far as regards the Christian religion, the deification of Jesus Christ was,

at best, but a personification, in an intense degree, of an ideal of moral goodness, and that when this moral goodness had infused itself into the life of the European races—in other words, when these races had accomplished a stage of moral evolution, the personification could be dispensed with by all—and could even now be dispensed with by the stronger and more advanced among us. How you, born as you were in the post-Darwin age, and educated in the Oxford, not of Pusey and Newman, but of men like Jowett, can have receded from this position, and joined the international association which of all others fights against it, passes my imagination to conceive. I can easily understand how people bred Roman Catholics can adhere more or less sincerely to their Church, out of inertia or family pride; I can understand women joining it, or weak men who never give themselves the labour of thought or have had no sound training. They are led by a kind of sexual emotion to seek spiritual satisfaction, or they are thrown into a condition of alarm about a future life and then offered refuge and shelter, or they wish to assert

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themselves in the face of contradictory relatives, or they wish (this, I suspect, is very common) to arouse new interest in themselves among other people. But, unless you are changed indeed, I cannot believe that you could be influenced by any such motives, and thus I remain lost in wonder. It really would gratify my scientific curiosity if you would let me have some explanation of your step.

I should desire to preserve my friendship with you as much as possible. The difficulty is that you must have become so different a man from what you were, that I feel as if the once Bertram Bevor was dead, and that if we are to be friends I should have to make friendship over again with a new and probably less congenial person. Of course I am aware that every one is constantly changing in some degree of rapidity, and that therefore no relations between men can remain absolutely the same for a year together; but it makes an immense difference whether men develop on somewhat parallel lines in the same direction or upon lines in diametrically opposite directions. Two men may walk from Grantham towards London at

different rates of speed and be further apart after ten hours than they were after four, but they are not nearly so far apart as if one had walked towards York while the other walked towards London.—Yours sincerely,

COURTENAY BENSON.

The next letter, in an illiterate handwriting, differing by the whole scale of education from Mr. Courtenay Benson's intellectual characters, came from an old family servant, the second gardener at Denham Court :—

THROSTLE LODGE, DENHAM COURT,  
30th April.

SIR,

I humbly ask your pardon for a liberty which I take as an old servant of your family who was with you in your father's time when you were a boy, in writing to you about what we have heard here of your becoming a Roman Catholic. Sir, I had no education and I do not know much about these things, but so much is said against Roman Catholics that I



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wish you not to think that I should judge you to have acted wrong; and though I am not in your own station in life, I know that you like to have, and deserve to have, as a good master the esteem and affection of all who are in your service or who are connected with you. This is why, sir, I wish to say that I for one have no feeling against Roman Catholics. I once knew an Irishman who was a Catholic, who was a very good, kind man, though not a very good gardener, for the best gardeners, as we all know, mostly come from Scotland. But this man did seem to hold more firmly to his religion and go to church more regular than most Protestants do. And he used to tell me things about the goodness of Catholic priests and Sisters of Mercy which made me feel sure that it could not be a bad tree which brought forth such good fruits. Sir, I always have thought that a most true saying of our blessed Lord about judging by fruits, for what else have we to judge by in the long-run, and it shows that our Lord went about observing what he saw. My grandfather used to tell us how a gentleman called Mr. Cobbett made a speech in his time at a meeting at Newbury, and

he said, in the old days in England the clergy shared their goods with the poor, not having families of their own, much more than they do now; though I am not blaming the parsons, because if a man is married the first duty is to his own wife and children. I have heard of other gentlemen and ladies who have become Roman Catholics, and I think that it is natural for them to become Roman Catholics when they wish to lay hold of something real and stiff in religion, just as it is for poor and uneducated persons to lay hold of the Salvation Army or some such body because it does seem more real religion.

I hope, sir, that you will pardon me for this great liberty which I take as an old servant of your family to assure you of my sentiments, and hoping that you are in good health and happiness,—I remain, Sir, your obedient humble servant,

JOHN POTTS.

Then, in a very artificial and affected handwriting, came a letter from a Berkshire neighbour of Bevor's, Mrs. Jerningham, of Witch-

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lea Park, whose husband also had a house in Eaton Square, which the family occupied without fail from April to the end of July in every year. Two of her daughters were very well married, but two yet remained at home, very nice girls, who always did and said the correct thing, and looked bright, well dressed, and pretty, but were not thought nearly so clever as their mother. Mrs. Jerningham wrote thus:—

WITCHLEA PARK,  
*Wednesday, 27th April.*

DEAR MR. BEVOR,

I could not help feeling some dismay when I read that notice in the *Times* about you. Not that I have any narrow feeling or bigoted dislike to Roman Catholicism. So many men and women of the best sort are or have become Catholics, and some friends of mine among them, especially dear Lady Avenel, that it would be absurd and presumptuous on my part to condemn their religion. But I do feel that to be a Roman Catholic

does, for a man in your position, lead to great difficulties.

In the first place, it may to some extent restrict the range within which you can find a wife who is in other respects desirable. There is a great deal of inconvenience and difficulty when the husband is a Roman Catholic and the wife a Protestant, or *vice versâ*, and *many* people don't like to expose their daughters to the risk either of conversion after marriage, or to that of discovering too late after marriage that a difference of opinion and religious practices, which seemed during honeymoon fervours easy to surmount, were in the humdrum of marriage life not so easily manageable. Then there is the difficulty about the education of the children in mixed marriages. On the other hand, if you marry a Catholic girl your choice is limited by their paucity of numbers, I mean among those whom you could otherwise marry; and then I am not at all sure whether that convent education which so many of them receive is the best kind of education for a wife and woman of the world to have had. Mrs. Aimless, who had such an education, told me that it

had given her the most *extraordinarily* exaggerated idea of the pleasures of the world, and that she is only just beginning *at the age of fifty* to discover how hollow many of these pleasures are. Of course you *might* be very fortunate in finding the right sort of Catholic girl—but I doubt it. If you could find a girl who had been bred in our way, but would become a Catholic for your sake, it would perhaps be the best plan. There are some girls who would do this, I am sure, but it often would cause an unpleasant breach in their families, and it is a most disastrous thing to marry a girl against the wish of her family. You secure yourself a number of enemies of the worst and closest kind for life, and she herself would probably regret the marriage, or be soured and embittered by the quarrel with her own relations. This would not, of course, happen if all parents were like me, tolerant in matters of religion, and not expecting every one, even our children, to think in the same way as we do; but such parents are not very common, though many people express tolerance. When it comes to action their tolerant theories mostly break down. I am sure

that this would not be the case with me, nor would it with my husband, who really is the most tolerant of men, chiefly because he has a natural hatred for controversy and arguing, due to his indolent disposition. I do not believe that he would say a word if one of his daughters became a Mohammedan.

Another objection to becoming a Catholic is that you disturb your relation with your neighbours, and tenants, and servants, more or less. This is vexatious, but it cannot, of course, be helped, and I should not suggest that it was by itself a sufficient reason against a change of Church, if you felt yourself conscientiously bound by your convictions to take such a step. It must, however, I should think, be troublesome to a Roman Catholic never quite to know how far people whom he meets disapprove of him. But you have plenty of social nerve and won't mind this, I daresay. After all it is not worse than it was to be a Gladstonian some years ago. Better indeed, because there is a much larger Catholic section of society than there ever was Gladstonian, and I must say that they hold together socially

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very well, which is more than the Gladstonians did.

Well, my dear Mr. Bevor, you may think that I confine myself to the worldly point of view. I know quite well that there are other and more important sides to the matter, but I cannot pretend to be a theologian, though I do pretend to be a friend of yours. I wonder what your Cumnor relatives think of it. They won't much like it, I fear, because they are very much fixed in their ideas of all kinds. Believe me, ever yours sincerely,

LOUISE JEERNINGHAM.

The next letter proved to be from a man rather older than Bertram Bevor, and, like him, of good social position, who did not appear often in London society, but lived a secluded, retired life, much occupied, it was said, with works of charity. Bertram occasionally met and talked with him at a Club to which they both belonged, and the conversation usually turned upon moral, social, and religious questions, which alone interested the serious mind of Henry

Houghton. He always seemed to Bevor to be of the best type of English Churchman. This was his letter:—

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE CLUB,  
PALL MALL, W.,  
26th April 1898.

MY DEAR BEVOR,

I have read with surprise and regret the announcement that you have thought it necessary to become a Roman Catholic, and I cannot understand why such a change should seem to you to be even desirable. We have, I feel sure, agreed in believing that the essence of religion consists in the free communication between each individual soul and the Universal Spirit of God, so that the stream of divine grace and influence might flow down and inspire and strengthen us for practical work in this world. We also agreed, I believe, in thinking that forms of worship and ecclesiastical associations were not absolutely necessary, but were of very great assistance for the maintenance of this communication, by facilitating at regular periods, and in common with others, the with-



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drawal of the soul of man from the noise and tumult of outer things, so that it might the better hear the voice of the Spirit.

Do you remember going with me one Sunday in April, two years ago, to the morning service at St. Paul's Cathedral? Afterwards we discussed it as we walked back along the Embankment. You spoke of the wonderful change of moral and spiritual atmosphere which one experiences as one passes out of the city streets into the doorway of that great church, as it were into a nobler and serener world—how calm it seems, how majestic, strong, and solemn! You said that nothing could be finer than the chanting before the sermon of the Nicæan Creed, by which the Anglican Church "*proudly and confidently claims her share in the full and vast inheritance of Christendom*"—those, I remember, were your words — and you added that nothing could be more beautiful and moving than the chanting of the Communion Service. You said that the whole service seemed to embody and set forth the several acts of the divine and mysterious drama: first, the emotions of fear, hope, trembling desire,

and expectation attending the approach to the Divine Presence of a soul conscious of its unworthiness and nothingness; secondly, the solemn and silent entrance of the Divine Spirit into the soul; and finally, the joy, contented peace, rest, and thankfulness of a soul filled and satisfied. This, I think, is much what you said; I remember it so well, because it was, in a sense, new to me, and yet gave an expression to unformed thoughts of my own. You said also that you were struck by the devout bearing of the communicants, and that they recalled to you Dante's expression, *turba tacita e divota*. You said that you thought that nothing more than this was needed to set forth the doctrine of a spiritual communion or feeding, accompanied by outward signs and symbols, held by the Church of England, and that the ritual of St. Paul's might be taken as representing the very heart and centre of our Church.

But now, if you thought all this two years ago, why should you think it necessary to seek for some further satisfaction in another Church which holds a doctrine on the nature of the Sacrament that is, as you once said, irrecon-

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cilable with that contained in the authoritative documents of the Church of England?

I have sometimes thought, as I stood in this great central church of London, and therefore of the English race, of which London is the headquarters, that the day would come when a multitude of bishops would meet there from all the ends of the world, representing not, as such assemblies do now, scanty flocks, scattered among other Protestant bodies, in America, Australia, and Africa, but all English-speaking Protestants; or, shall I call them, non-Roman Catholics? They might, two or three centuries hence, all belong to one great Church, and number hundreds of millions of the sovereign race of the world. It pleases me to imagine bishops representing all that multitude, and perhaps many millions also of the dark races, taking part, three hundred years from now, in a celebration as simple, stately, and solemn as that which now takes place every Sunday in St. Paul's. Surely if there is only a possibility of this, it is worth while to do one's best to preserve and hand down the Church of England. But I myself feel no doubt whatever, either

that the Anglican, as part of the Universal Church, is built upon the foundations of the Apostles, or that her future will be as great, or greater than that of the Roman Church, and, as I believe, still more beneficial. Clear of superstitions and bad practices, derived from ages when a civilised priesthood had to deal with child-like barbarians, the Anglican Church will carry down all the essential part of the Christian religion into the ages yet to come. Upon all this hope you turn your back; you cling to a dead past and abandon a living future. You refuse to throw in your lot with the new chosen race among whom you were so happy as, by the will of Providence, to be born. Forgive my speaking so strongly.

I suppose that you would answer that you are now convinced that the Roman is the true Catholic Church. You must arrive at this conviction either by a study of history, or by what you see of the present nature and works of the Roman Church. No doubt your knowledge of history is greater than mine. But I also have to some extent studied ecclesiastical history, and I have never been able to see that

it proves the claim of the Roman to be the one true Church. The rise of that Church, after the fall of the Western Empire, seems to be quite explicable by natural causes. Who can say that what is left of the Roman Church will always continue to hold together? Much in the history of the Popes, so far from bearing a supernatural character, seems to me to be only too sadly human. What, for instance, do you make of Alexander VI., or Paul III., or Julius II., or Leo X.? Can you possibly think of them as of men divinely commissioned and inspired? And if it be not true that the Roman Church, now centralised in the Roman See, is the one body constantly inspired and guided by the Divine Spirit of Truth, upon what an appalling falsehood, or, to say the least, error, is its whole existence founded—or, at least, the whole theory of its existence!

My personal knowledge of the present condition of the Church of Rome is hardly sufficient to justify me in forming a strong opinion. All that I have heard or read about that system does, however, inspire me with much distrust. It seems to me that it tends, to say the least, to

place between God and the individual soul, a vast constitution, the organised priesthood, consciously or unconsciously influenced by its own corporate interest. They aspire, not like our clergy to be ministers, but to be rulers. I cannot but think that this priesthood—I do not say intentionally, but by the result of the whole system—has hindered the people in free use of the sacraments, by means of the practice of formal confession and absolution; has materialised the meaning of the sacraments; has kept from the laity so far as it could, the knowledge of the Scriptures; has instituted or allowed to arise a multitude of minor cults which distract worship from its true object; and has perhaps even tampered with the absolutism of moral principles. In any case I think that the practice of the precepts of Christ and of St. Paul is of higher importance than the holding of the most nearly true doctrines upon the sacraments, the nature of the priesthood, and of the Church. Certainty as to these things is beyond our reach, nor do I believe that they are of the real essence of the religion. As to the rightness of practising the Christian virtues, loving-kindness, temper-

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ance, self-denial, aid of our brethren, and endeavouring to have all the temper of mind which goes along with these, I do not think that there is real disagreement among Christians, whether they are Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Congregationalists, or Quakers. One sees these virtues flourish, both among those who take the highest sacramental views, and among those who, like Quakers, think it right to dispense with sacraments altogether. There is, I think, much to be said against Roman Catholicism as a system; but if I go among the people of a French town, I do not, as a matter of fact, find them very different to those of a town in England—there are much the same virtues and vices, in much the same proportions. I do not desire to interfere with their religion there, or to see them broken up into contending sects, much as I may disapprove of the theory and practice of their Church. I like well the words of the Collect in which we “pray for the good estate of the Catholic Church, that it may be so guided and governed by Thy good Spirit, that *all who profess and call themselves Christians* may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith *in unity of*

*spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life."*

The reason why I most deplore the fact of men like you joining the Roman Church in *England* is that this action assists in the further break up of this unity of spirit and bond of peace in England. Fifty or sixty years ago the division between the Church of England and the various Nonconformists was bad enough. It gave rise to much bitterness of spirit, and hindered co-operation in good works, and thus was contrary to Christian charity and practical utility. But at that time there was hardly any Roman Catholic body in England. At the present day, with their seventeen bishops, their two thousand clergy, their religious orders, and numerous schools and churches, and large body of laity among all classes, and active propaganda, they have added immensely to the religious divisions and bitterness in England. All this increases the separation into distinct camps of the religious life and philanthropic and missionary work of the country, and indeed throughout the whole of the empire. Moreover, this particular controversy has, I fear, led too many of our clergy to



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direct their thoughts too much to the ecclesiastical and too little to the ethical side of the religion. I have noticed an increase of this tendency since the recent discussion as to "Anglican orders." This, again, increases the division between the parties in our own Church, so that there is now almost as much separation and absence of co-operation between extreme "High Churchmen" and "Low Churchmen" as there is between "High Churchmen" and Roman Catholics. They will hardly even attend each other's churches.

I am certain that the deep divisions between professing Christians, and their bitter attacks upon each other, are largely the cause of the increasing indifference of the practical-minded men of the working classes to all religion. They read in their newspapers, accounts, often spiced with sardonic journalistic comment, of modern religious controversies, and they say, "What good can come out of all this?" and put their trust in purely secular agencies.

And indeed, when after reading our "religious" newspapers on either side, I turn to the Epistles of St. Paul, and meditate upon his lofty and burning words, exhorting Christians to peace,

unity, charity, and concord, and commanding them to hold to the substance of their religion, to put away strife and contention about vain and unprofitable questions, and to regard rites and ceremonies as shadows, I myself feel a profound humiliation and sense of littleness.

Do not be in a hurry to answer this letter; do not answer it at all if you prefer that; but I should some day like to know your reasons for taking this step. I feel discouraged, and troubled, and dismayed by it.—Believe me, yours sincerely,

HENRY HOUGHTON.

This was the next letter:—

BROMPTON ORATORY, LONDON, S.W.,  
28th April 1898.

DEAR MR. BEVOR,

You will probably hardly remember me as an old school-fellow. My name is Hubert Crosdaile. You were a brilliant oppidan and I a quiet colleger, but we sometimes talked together when we were in the same division in the upper fifth. We have

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never met since that time. You went to Oxford, and subsequently into the Diplomatic Service; I to Cambridge, and then into Anglican orders. I cannot now refrain from writing to you to express my joy at the news that you too have been led into the Church. It may perhaps interest you to hear in what way I was guided, by paths doubtless very different to those by which you have reached the Eternal City. After I had taken Anglican orders I worked for some years as a curate in a country parish. But that life did not satisfy my desire to be of service, and I joined an Anglican brotherhood which devoted itself to work in a poor quarter of South London. The work itself was good, and I have not seen elsewhere greater personal devotion than that of my colleagues. Yet before long I began to feel doubts and questionings as to the Church of England which I had never felt in previous days. We taught strong and decided doctrines as to the necessity of belonging to the Church and the efficacy of the sacraments. The more I taught and spoke about these subjects, the more clearly and grandly the ideal of the Church rose before my

imagination, the less well did the theory of a Catholic visible Church of which the Church of England formed part seem to correspond with that ideal. Often in my sermons I said, "The Church says this," or "The Church commands that," and a mocking whisper seemed as often to ask, "What Church?" "Where is the seat of authority?" I and my friends chose our doctrines from the ancient documents and writers of the Church. Low Churchmen chose the doctrines which suited them, and often contradicted ours. We spoke of the Church as if it were visible, concrete, clearly demarcated by common obedience, an embodied and living organism like the British Empire. Often I began to feel that I was cheating myself with words when I spoke of the Roman, Greek, and Anglican Churches as one Church—for we excluded from the term all non-episcopal communities. Was it not like calling the British Empire, the Russian Empire, and the German Empire one State?

About this time I had long conversations with a Wesleyan artisan who was in some doubt as to his own position. I exhorted him not to

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delay, but to join the "Catholic Church." He would answer, "You mean what we call the Church of England; but just as you deny that we Nonconformists are already part of the Catholic Church which is mentioned in the creeds, so the Roman Catholics deny that any of you are part of it. How am I to know that you are more right than they?" I could only tell him that the Roman Catholics were mistaken, and talk about the history of the English Church and her apostolical succession. He used to say, "Why then have we never heard the English Church talked about as Catholic till late times? Surely our ancestors would not have let the word drop out of common use if they had believed in it and valued it."

So life went on, and I was more and more dominated by a sense of unreality. I began to feel like an exile from my true country. One year my health broke down through over-strain, and I was sent abroad for change and rest. I travelled, still sick and languid, through the Rhine country, and Swiss Catholic cantons, and Savoy. I often entered the churches, which I admitted to be, in these countries, true repre-

sentatives of the universal Catholic Church. In England I had never entered what I then held to be *there* the schismatic churches of the "Italian Mission." I could not help feeling, as I looked at some old peasant woman kneeling in prayer, that she possessed something which I did not. The mass did not differ much in outward appearance from our office, according to our manner of celebration in the chapel of my brotherhood; it was often less careful and ornate, yet I felt that there was that in it which we had not. I ascribed these feelings to the work of the Tempter. I returned to London, and plunged into new labours. I almost succeeded, for a time, in forgetting these questionings. But they were renewed when by chance I came into contact with poor Irish Catholics, of whom there were many in our crowded district. I often said to these people, "I too am a Catholic like you," and although I ascribed to invincible ignorance the utter impossibility of making them understand this, an incident of the kind always left a disturbing impression on my mind. About this time I came across a quotation from

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Seneca, which affected me in a singular way. It is this, *Mira in quibusdam rebus verborum proprietas est, et consuetudo sermonis antiqui quædam efficacissimis notis signat*—"There is a wonderful propriety of words in certain matters, and the custom of ancient speech stamps certain things with most effectual marks." I copied it into a book which is lying on my table as I write. I thought of what St. Augustine said in his controversy with the Manichees, that although they called themselves Catholics, and had churches everywhere, yet if you went into any town, even where they most prevailed, and asked the first person you saw to direct you to the "Catholic Church," there was only one kind of church to which he would direct you. I knew that if in any English town you asked the way to the "Catholic Church," ninety-nine persons out of one hundred would understand that you wished for the Roman Catholic. The hundredth person might pretend not to know which you meant. I knew that for at least three hundred years the popular instinct had appropriated the words "catholic," "altar," "mass," "priest," to the Roman Catholics, often

with opprobrious intention, and the words "Protestant," "communion table," "communion service," "clergyman," to Anglicans. "*Consuetudo sermonis antiqui quædam efficacissimis notis signat.*" I felt—much as I resisted the conviction—that Rome was justified in holding that the Church of England had had no continuous and unbroken intention of ordaining priests to offer the sacrifice, in the sense held by Rome, and virtually professed also by Anglicans like the men in my own brotherhood. I read history, and I saw that the whole doctrinal breach at the Reformation turned upon the denial of the doctrine of a miraculous change in the elements, that miracle which men like ourselves now maintained, but which true Protestants in the English Church still deny.

I endeavoured to war down my doubts, but they grew continually stronger. I passed through three more years of misery and mental torment. I began to feel myself to be a hypocrite and a deceiver; my religious devotion grew cold, and I feared that I might lose it altogether, falling as it were between two stools. I cannot tell you what unhappiness I



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suffered. Every morning, at last, I awoke with a feeling as though some great calamity had happened to me. All that I saw, heard, said, and did, seemed to become more and more unreal, as though it happened in a dream. It was like a terrible mental sickness, and sometimes I feared that I might become literally mad.

At last, one day in the autumn before last, private family business took me into West London. Thinking about this business and nothing else, I was walking down the Brompton Road, and came in front of this Oratory, where I now am. I stopped, looked up at the church, and seemed to hear a voice say, "It is time to make an end of it." Perhaps some one on the pavement, talking about his own affairs, did say this: I was in a kind of trance. I entered the church as if I moved in a dream, and asked to see the first priest whose name I saw written upon a confessional. The next day I was allowed to make my profession of faith. Later on I received the priesthood, and became a son of St. Philip Neri.

I cannot describe to you the peace and joy which followed my conversion. It has remained

with me in spite of all troubles, and of inevitable periods of coldness and dryness. At once I felt, not as if I had exchanged something for something else, but as if I had passed out of nothing into reality. I felt as one awoke from a troubled dream to a joyful existence. Anglicanism seemed a mere theory, not a thing in itself, in spite of all the moral goodness, piety, and energy in good works of those who belong to it. No one has experienced all this virtue better than I have, or recognises it more freely, but it was their *Church* which seemed to me to be non-existent. They, or many of them, have the faith, but are not in the Church. I can truly say that after my change my love for my fellow-countrymen was increased and widened. Before, I looked away from them, and with desire towards the Catholic Church. Now I look towards them with a great desire that they also should enter in. At peace myself, I can bend all my will to desire the peace of others. If to the natural race virtues of the Englishman, honesty, sincerity, courage, justice, zeal for righteousness, could be added those still finer qualities which so flourish in the

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Catholic Church, tender charity, humility, reverence, fraternity, obedience, sweetness, natural joyfulness, how perfect a flower of humanity might grow upon this dear soil.

I now bid you welcome within the doors of the Church. It may be a comfort to you to know that I have never for a day or an hour regretted my own step, or felt a doubt or shadow of turning. Even if the whole of the Christian religion should be a dream and delusion, how, after all, could a man live better, both in the interests of his own real happiness and that of others, than by following the rule of life laid down by the Catholic Church, and by being a member of this best, world-wide confraternity?

I hope that you will some day visit us here in Brompton. I am not the only old Etonian here. Our services are, I think, beautiful and consoling. I cannot tell you how much of late my devotion towards the Blessed Virgin has increased. Before I became a Catholic I used to try to think of her as real and existing, but I never truly, as I now see, succeeded in doing so. When at Sunday vespers we chant the

solemn *Magnificat*, I can hardly express what a flood of sweetness fills my poor heart. And yet I do not think that my devotion to the Mother interferes with my devotion to the Son; rather it seems to increase it, just as, even in human affections, love for a whole family seems to increase one's love for each member of it. How rejoiced I shall be to know that in you one more heart, too, shares in all this full sweetness of love.

H. C.

The next letter was from a man with whom Bertram Bevor's acquaintance rested upon a foundation of golf. When they met they either played it together or talked about it, and had nothing else in common. The figure of Mowbray Norman rose up before Bevor's mental vision—stoutly built, medium height, ruddy-brown complexion, grey-blue eyes, cleanly-shaven face, red coat, flannel knickerbockers, neat stockings and shoes, a driver in his hand, an earnest expression, his eye on the ball, and a caddie behind him—all set in a maritime landscape, under a

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pale-blue sky. A most normal English type. He was very like hundreds of thousands of his fellow-countrymen.

5 CONNAUGHT GATE, LONDON, W.,  
30th April 1898.

MY DEAR BEVOR,

Here is an admirable opportunity of getting a long lease of a bit of land on the Essex coast which can be made into a first-rate golf-links. About a mile and a half long by half a mile wide, splendid sand-hills, not more than two miles from a station with good trains to town. Terms are lease of seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years, £500 down, and £50 annual rent. I am trying to find fifty men who will put down £10 each and form the nucleus of a club. I hope that you will join; it really is an opportunity not to be lost.

By the way, I hear that you have lately become a Roman Catholic. I know nothing about their manners and customs, but I trust that this will not prevent you from playing golf on Sundays. I really am so busy now that I can hardly ever

take any other day, and I should be sorry not to have any more rounds with you at the old royal game.—Yours sincerely,

MOWBRAY NORMAN.

Bertram Bevor then opened a letter written in a strong uncompromising handwriting. It was from a clergyman of the Evangelical school in the neighbourhood of Denham Court, who had acted as his tutor for a time in his boyhood, and had prepared him for confirmation. He was usually considered, especially by neighbouring curates, very old-fashioned in his ideas. The letter ran thus :—

LONGRIDGE VICARAGE, BERKS,

27th April.

DEAR BERTRAM,

You must be aware how strongly I disapprove of the step which you have taken. You have been seduced, like so many others, by the siren allurements of Rome, exercised through a false-minded (often unconsciously, no doubt) and intriguing priesthood, who, like the Pharisees denounced by our Lord, compass sea and land

to make one proselyte, and when they have caught him, make him tenfold more a child of hell than themselves. I see with grief and horror their success in these latter days, not only in making actual perverts, but (and this is worse, because more insidious) in corrupting by their evil communications the purity of the Reformed Church of England, which, just as Israel so easily fell into backsliding towards the Egyptian idolatries, or as Lot's wife looked back towards the wicked and condemned city, does from time to time, and in these days most greedily, hanker after the carnalities to escape from which she was led out into the wilderness. Words would fail me were I to attempt fully to express my indignation with regard to the traitors among the ordained clergy of the Church of England, who, having signed the Thirty-nine Articles in order to gain an entrance into the ministry, make it their object to bring back the Roman Mass, the doctrine of the material sacrifice, the belief in Purgatory, compulsory confession as a condition to receiving communion, and the whole mediæval superstition. The Romanists, and their imitators—who are even baser than

the Romanists, because they break every law of their own Church—turn to their advantage the natural weaknesses and inclinations of the corrupt human heart. They fight not against fallen nature, but minister to its sensual cravings. All their worship, especially the idolatry which they substitute for the Lord's Supper, is originally imitated from heathen rites, and is such as men would have invented for themselves, if no Christian revelation had been vouchsafed, and if they had been left to their natural light, or rather darkness. Under the name of prayer the Romanists, and especially the Jesuits, whose victim, I have no doubt, you especially are, use the force of disciplined and combined wills to overcome and capture weak individual wills. What they call "conversion" is, I firmly believe, a scientifically applied process of hypnotic influence and suggestion. But I should have hoped that you were a sufficiently strong character, and were well enough grounded and built up in the spirit, and glorious freedom, and true faith of our Lord, to resist these evil and black arts, as of sorcerers or magicians, exerted by those



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in the employment of that pernicious and meretricious organisation in which our fathers—too much condemned now—saw the influence of Antichrist, or the Scarlet Woman of the Seven Hills. They were right in the main.

I grieve for you as for a lost soul, and I speak the truth, painful though it is, when I say that I would sooner have heard of your death than of your perversion. For then I should have mourned for your bodily death, in hope of a glorious resurrection; but now I mourn for your spiritual death, and I know not whether from that there can be any resurrection, save to an eternal pain and remorse. My one consolation is that I know that with God all things are possible, and that you may yet by a marvellous dispensation see the error of your ways, abjure that strange and wicked country, and, like the prodigal son, return to the house of your merciful and forgiving Father. With this hope, I remain, your friend and former tutor,

WILLIAM COWPER.

Bertram then read a little letter from a nun in a London convent, with whom very many

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years earlier his mother had been acquainted, and whom for her sake he had occasionally visited :—

CONVENT OF THE ASSUMPTION,  
HICKMAN SQUARE, N.W.

DEAR MR. BEVOR,

Would you forgive me if I venture, as an old friend of your beloved mother, to say how greatly I rejoice in hearing of your reconciliation with the Holy Catholic Church. I have for many years prayed for this to our Lady and to St. Joseph, and especially before the Altar of the Sacred Heart in our chapel. I am sure that you will now find a wonderful peace and happiness of mind in belonging to the Church in which one knows for certain what to do and what to believe. I often feel so sorry for those who are still outside, and who wander about in such dreadful darkness and confusion. I am growing old, and often feel very tired of my life in the convent, and pray our Lord that He will not keep me too long in this life; yet I always feel most grateful for all the mercies which I have received,

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and, above all, that I was from my birth a Catholic.

How I wish that your dear mother, who was so kind and good, might, while she still lived, have been guided into the Church, for in soul and heart she belonged to us, and does now, I am sure, rejoice in Paradise in knowing that her son has found the way of peace and safety. —Ever, dear Mr. Bevor, most sincerely yours,

SISTER THERESA.

Bertram Bevor then read a letter from an old Eton and Oxford friend, a man of society and clubland, a sportsman, traveller, an *habitué* at times of Africa or the borders of Thibet, or the Rocky Mountains, at others of Piccadilly, the Boulevards, or the Riviera. The letter ran thus :—

QUEEN STREET, MAYFAIR, W.,  
28th April.

DEAR OLD FELLOW,

So you have become a Catholic. I never knew that you were inclined that way; but these sort of inclinations often

lurk underground, and then break out suddenly, as it seems to other people. Well, I am not a bit surprised or shocked. That Catholic Church of yours has always had to me the air of a great lady, of high and undoubted descent, with no misgivings at all as to herself, and consequent ease, repose, and simplicity of manner. I have always thought and said that this was the best and most natural Church for a gentleman to belong to. She offers a really dignified service, and we all desire to serve—*nous autres*—that is our need. It is the service of a noble and stately mistress, who makes a very great figure in the world. Of course, unless one has very strong convictions one cannot well accept it. I doubt whether I could ever believe strongly enough—in any religion I mean—to justify me in taking such a step, which is a very public profession of belief in definite Christianity. But I feel sure that if I were ever converted to anything definite it would be to Catholicism. To join that Church would be the best way of announcing that one was converted, and I should certainly like to have the courage of my opinions and

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to show it to the British public, as you have done.

One thing bothers me, and that is this. Supposing the Christian religion is really believed in, it ought to make a tremendous practical difference in way of life between those who believe and those who do not pretend to do so. It ought to split up society from top to bottom. But it does not do so. People of most opposite opinions dine, and dance, and shoot, and talk politics together. Do you think that many of those who say that they believe, and go to church, really believe any more than the others? However, all this is not much to the point, and not well put. I never could express my ideas, such as they are. What I mean is, that there is a real and tremendous division between people of different social classes. For instance, the professionals, lawyers, and doctors, and clergymen, do not, except on rare occasions, eat with or intermarry with the artisan species. But I do not see any such division between those who do and those who do not accept the Christian faith. They mix even more than people on different sides in politics. This

gives me a feeling of unreality as to their differences.

I need not tell you, old fellow, that this business will not make the smallest particle of difference in our friendship—so far as I am concerned, I mean. Perhaps you will not think it right to consort with heretics? But remember that I am a very mild one, and by no means prepared to burn for Protestantism.—Heretically yet affectionately yours,

B. D. VILLIERS.

The next letter was from an old and kind friend of Bertram's parents, who lived a country life not far from Denham. It was short.

GOLDENBANKS HALL,  
26th April 1898.

MY DEAR BERTRAM,

I see a notice in the *Times* of the step which you have taken. I have never myself felt any inclination to join the Roman Catholic Church, nor yet any antipathy towards it, but rather a tender feeling towards what the good

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Dr. Johnson used to call "the Old Religion." I have never believed that any special form of Church, or indeed creed, was essential to salvation, and I have therefore stayed during my long life (how short it all now seems) contentedly in the Church in which I was born, the more so since no other would bring me into such friendly and useful contact with my neighbours of all classes, rich and poor. You know that I rarely quit my home, and still more rarely travel in other countries. But I should be the last person in the world to deem myself entitled to criticise the choice of another in the matter of religion, and my sole wish with regard to you, my dear boy, is that your choice may bring you all possible rest of mind and happiness. My love for your father and mother, and remembrance of all their kindness to me, makes me wish this most fervently. I well remember that your dear mother could never bear that any one should speak bitterly, or even lightly, of the Roman Catholic Church, and I think that you inherited most of your temperament from her. God bless you, my dear Bertram, and

ever lead you in His own way.—Believe that I always remain your old friend,

JOHN HUNTINGDON.

Lord St. Dunstan was a man of about thirty-nine years old, and had been an Oxford friend of Bertram Bevor's. His tender, passionate, loyal, chivalrous, and romantic spirit would have led him, had he lived in the twelfth century, into the Crusades, or had he lived in the seventeenth, into the ranks of the fine aristocracy who fought and died so freely for the cause of King Charles. Living when he did, Lord St. Dunstan found nothing more worthy of his steel than the attempt to restore the Catholic religion in England. Here was a cause to enlist all the poetry and fire of his nature. He had become one of the recognised leaders of the powerful association whose objects were to restore in England all the central doctrines and rites of the pre-Reformation Church, to emancipate the Church from the claim of the State to exercise ultimate control through legislature and courts of law,



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and, finally, to accomplish the reunion of the Anglican Church, thus restored and liberated, with the great body of the Western Catholic Church centred in the Roman See. Not all of the party went so far as this, but Lord St. Dunstan was sincere and courageous. He made no attempt to conceal his belief that the movement begun by the Oxford Tractarians could have no other logical, legitimate, or rational end. His outspokenness made him respected by his fellow-countrymen, even by those most opposed to him. No one, moreover, engaged in this religious warfare showed himself a warrior of more gentle spirit. Lord St. Dunstan never allowed himself to misrepresent the motives or undervalue the sincerity of his adversaries. This was his letter :—

MARYTON, CHESTER,

*28th April 1896.*

MY DEAR BEVOR,

Our old friendship, which will, I trust, be strengthened rather than weakened, impels me to write to you at this crisis of

your life. I feel with regard to you as one still tossed, at the call of what he believes to be his duty, on the troublous waves, might feel with regard to one who had been permitted to come to harbour.

Vobis parta quies, nullum maris æquor arandum  
Ora necque Ausoniæ semper fugientia retro

" Quærenda—

To you it is permitted to rest in closest communion with that great central Church which does, in my opinion, more than any other, represent the ancient and noble idea, rooted in the Gospel itself, of an united Christendom.

You know that the one end of my life, that to which all my efforts have been directed, is to do the little I can to make ready the way for the reunion of England with the Apostolic See. I hold that See to be the rightful centre of the whole Church, and to its communion we English belonged for a thousand happier years. I acknowledge, not indeed the unlimited power, but the *de jure* primacy of the Roman See. Yet I feel no doubt as to the essential

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and fundamental catholicity of the Church of England, or the validity of her orders and sacraments. In a hundred ways the fair image of Catholic Christianity has been marred and defaced in her, even as the Divine Image in man was marred and defaced at the fall of Adam, but it has not been destroyed.

*Tu non sei morta, ma se' ismarrita  
Anima mia, che ti si lamenti.*

So might the Church of England say. Her life is injured, but not extinct, and during the last sixty years it has shown wonderful signs of recovery. It is like a tree which has been beaten and deformed by cruel winds, but yet lives and grows, and may in the end be all the stronger for its early trials. No one can doubt this who has lived so much as I have done among those English priests and laymen, so often misrepresented, who combine evangelical fervour with the most profound and vivid belief in the divine order of the world, the actual existence of our Lord, not as a mere moral idea, but as a person, the effects of grace, and

the tremendous reality of the sacraments. Our long winter of Protestantism has at least this advantage, that it is followed, or will be, when these early trying days are over, by an astonishing outburst of spring. This could not be, had there been a perpetual summer of Catholicism. Nowhere, already, I firmly believe, can there be more desire for the beauty of worship, more ardour for the salvation of souls, more trembling belief in the reality of the Divine Presence in the sacraments, than there is in hundreds and even thousands of English parishes at the present moment. Who knows this if not I? A little more, and what wondrous flowers of grace and devotion might not break up through the softened soil of our dear England. Already our movement touches the hearts of the people, drawn by the worship of the Holy Eucharist. Nowhere are the Anglo-Catholic churches more crowded by devout laity than in the poorest quarters of our great cities. One thing more is necessary, and I, for my own part, often feel tempted to say, as St. Paul said of charity, that without *unity* all things else are nothing worth. Indeed, what

is unity, what is the Church, but charity embodied and made visible? I know that St. Augustine, commenting on this passage of St. Paul, identifies charity with the visible unity of the Catholic Church.

Yet, alas! reunion is still, save for a miracle, impossible. *Non nobis, Domine*—not to us who now live will it be given to see it. Like Moses we must wander all our days, with half-broken hearts, in the wilderness, after seeing and almost touching the promised land. Hardly at most may we drink of the torrent by the way. But it is our faith that the full Catholic doctrine and worship will be restored in England, that schism will then lose its meaning, and that reunion will then come to pass, as it were, by a natural healing process. Surely all nature tends to unity by a spiritual law of gravitation.

For my own part I am resolved to throw in my lot with the Anglo-Catholic Church.

My *natural inclination* is to reconcile myself with the central Church. How sweet would be to me, of all men, its clear rule and order, its rest and calm! It surely is a punishment for

the breach of Christian unity, that men who would fain press on towards the deeper mysteries are detained by these controversies in the outer courts of the Temple. They are exposed also to the temptations of the intellect and the will, to the *libido sciendi* and the *libido dominandi*, and kept far from the perfect peace to which the soul aspires.

But the cause dear to my heart, I say again, is the restoration of the full Catholic faith, doctrine, and spirit, so long impaired and almost ruined, in my native land. It seems to me that this glorious work can only be effected through the Anglican Church. I cannot doubt that when this has been effected, our formal reunion with the great Church of the West will be brought to pass, and that the restored unity of spirit, doctrine, and ritual; of the *lex credendi* and *lex orandi*, will embody itself once more (and this time on a higher plane) in visible corporate and organic unity. I trust also that the future will see the reunion of the Eastern Churches to the Chair of St. Peter, which is, so far as my weak mind can see, the only possible final centre or keystone of the visible universal

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Church. I cannot but believe that all this will be brought to pass in "the eternal years" by the Divine will "strongly and sweetly ordering all things." It will not, indeed, be in my day, and this cross I must bear with patience.

I am convinced that it is right for me to remain upon the battlefield, though of all wars these civil wars in the English Church are most miserable.

Yet I cannot altogether regret that men like you, who are less committed, should from time to time, when after long and constant prayer they feel themselves so guided, join and strengthen the Roman Catholic Church in these islands. I do not for a moment doubt that it has been a great benefit to England that this light has so steadily and brightly shone among us. The Roman Catholic Church in England holds up constantly, immutably, and with authority, the standard of doctrine and ritual to which it is our object to attain, and it keeps Englishmen in mind, as nothing else could, of the ideal of the visible and organic unity of Christendom. Besides who can say

what may not be brought by that constant desire for unity which ascends from all your altars in our midst, as it does from so many of ours?

Now farewell, my dear Bevor, and may God bless you. Forgive me that I have sometimes thought of you as if you were but a dilettante in things spiritual; I always, in many respects, loved and admired you, and now my love and admiration are vastly increased. As for me, give me your prayers, for although I fully believe that I am acting rightly, yet I shall always feel in some degree an exile. Truly can I say, like King David, "One thing have I desired of the Lord—even that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His temple." And, like David, I may also say, "I should utterly have fainted, but that I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. O tarry thou the Lord's leisure; be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart; and put thou thy trust in the Lord."

This is indeed my rock and my salvation.



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Do you know these lines of Blake's ?

I will not rest from mortal strife,  
Nor shall the sword sleep in my hand,  
Till I have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant land.

They have haunted my brain of late. Fare-  
well, once again, my dear friend. Come what  
may, I remain, now and ever, your affectionate  
friend,

ST. DUNSTAN.

The next letter in the pile was written by an elderly English Jesuit called Father Gerard. Bertram Bevor had met him more than once in visits to Northumberland, and also in London, and had on several occasions discussed with him questions of religion. Father Gerard had the manner usually found in the older members of his society, calm, suave, and peaceful, indicative of immense experience of men and things, and gently humorous. He had spent his life in the occupation of fishing for men, with very fair

success, in different quarters of the British Empire, and had acquired a great experience of what to say and what not to say, according to the person and stage of development of character, and according to the circumstances of the hour. In his way, like St. Paul, he could make himself "all things to all men." He had the manner which inspires others to talk, spoke little himself, except to give a direction to the conversation, and proceeded rather by way of question than by assertion. Among the higher Catholic families in England, he was, being of good birth and breeding, popular as a spiritual adviser, and always welcome as a guest. This was his letter:—

FARM STREET, LONDON, W.,  
1st May 1898.

DEAR MR. BEVOR,

You will no doubt have seen, or certainly heard of, a notice in the *Times* to the effect that you had become a Catholic. Judging by the conversation which I had the pleasure

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of having with you two or three months ago, it seems to me hardly possible that this rumour can be true; at any rate I shall not believe it until I hear some confirmation. I do of course most ardently desire that you should become a Catholic, and it seems to me that, with the grace of God, a mind constituted and disposed like yours must some day find its way to the only satisfactory solution; but unless your mind (which is indeed, through grace, possible) has undergone an almost miraculously rapid development since I last saw you, I cannot think that you have been reconciled to the Church, nor indeed can I wish that you should be so until not only your reason is satisfied, but your heart is moved, and, as it were, compelled to enter the gate which leads to full conviction. It sometimes happens that men enter the Catholic Church and soon again fall away from it. The cause is that their minds have been for a time convinced, but not their hearts. We do not desire such converts, and I have often warned persons not to take the step unless they felt that they could not do otherwise. A merely intellectual change of view is not a real conversion. What,

after all, is faith, but a reasoned and deliberate surrender of the heart to the instinct, not of the lower, but of the higher life in man.

I have gathered from my interesting conversations with you that your difficulty does not so much lie in questions as between the Church of England and the Catholic Church, as in really accepting the full belief in the divinity of Christ and the general ground-work of the Christian religion. If you could accept these primary doctrines, you said, I think, that in your opinion the Catholic development of them was "logical, continuous, and consistent." You added that, in any case, the Catholic mode of worship best corresponded to the universal instincts and needs of human nature, and satisfied the implanted emotions which crave to express themselves by adoration, and that therefore, although not a Catholic, you more frequently attended Catholic churches than any other. If, as I imagine, the report in the *Times* is erroneous, does it not probably arise from a natural misconstruction by some one of this practice of yours? It has made you appear to be that which at present you are not.

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It seems to me that all the reasonings and arguments in the world cannot do more than establish an antecedent probability or possibility in favour of the supernatural character of the Christian religion. It is impossible, I should say, to *prove* that this religion was not evolved out of the confused working of the elements of this world, and that it is not a mere step in the general evolution. The "analogies with nature" and the "argument from design" upon which so much stress was laid by writers in the last century, prove treacherous weapons in the light of more modern knowledge of the workings of nature.

How is it possible to learn by observation of external things whether the history of the world is governed by the Divine Will, or by fatal self-evolution from some remote and intangible primary cause? Gibbon, for instance, mentions several natural causes to which he imputes the success of the Christian religion, coming when it did in history. How can we *know* whether these were steps and preparations divinely ordained for a divine event, or whether we are, like Gibbon, to deem them to be the natural

causes of an illusion? One might show similar causes for the gradual centralisation of the Catholic Church at Rome, such as the effects of the barbarian invasions upon the Roman Empire, and so forth. In what light are we to consider these events?

The later centralising movement culminating in the Vatican decrees of 1870 seems to be due to the break-up of the old European system by the French Revolution and its consequences. How shall we regard this? Are we to distinguish, and say that the causes to which Gibbon attributes the rise of Christianity were divinely ordained preparations, but that the causes which led to the rise of the Roman See, and ultimately to greater centralisation in the Catholic Church, were natural causes, not divinely ordained?

All these questions resolve themselves into one primary question: Are the events in this world immediately controlled and directed by the operation of the Will of God? To answer this each man must fall back upon the intuition of his own heart and his personal soul-experience. His own life carefully meditated over as a sacred

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text, and the life of those nearest to him, in so far as he can know it, must be to him the key to the Scriptures and to the history of the Church in the world.

But here, in the end, he is brought to a choice, a venture, an act of faith. He must choose whether to believe that forces which he feels pressing upon his own will and urging it in a given direction, are from God or from lower nature. In the end he comes to a choice, venture, and decision, and, as it were, arrives at a river, a Rubicon, to cross. He must choose between believing in government by God or in cosmic autonomy.

Nothing is so false as the idea that there can be a true religion of reason without this venture of faith. Reason can lead you to the brink of the river, but cannot take you across. To enter into the life of the Catholic Church is, again, to make a venture. Such a step more nearly resembles the deliberate choice of a career than it does the working out of the final solution of a mathematical problem. Happy, in my judgment, are those who, born outside the Church, can and do make an act of choice which at

once so severely tries, and so strongly confirms, their character. Once they are within the Church, they will find their resolution strengthened, fixed, and made part of themselves, by the whole system of practical piety and observance, and their hearts comforted by the spirit of consolation and joy which reigns within the holy city.

When we are children we believe things *because* we are told them on authority. When we are men we have to *choose* whether we shall or shall not *accept* as true, things which are told us on authority. At adolescence we shall probably revolt, in the reaction against acceptance upon mere authority. As we grow older we are inclined to attach more weight to the sum of human experience, in which authority consists. The Middle Ages were the childhood, the "Reformation" or "Renaissance" the crisis of adolescence, of the modern European races. In the end, as I firmly believe, these races will, individual by individual, accept, by will or choice, taught by experience of the vanity of other paths that lead nowhere, the essence of the doctrines which they held without reasoning in their childhood.



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I believe that the break-up of unity in the sixteenth century was part of the divine scheme intended to purify the Church through suffering. I believe that the process of gradual healing and re-integration which is now going on is part of the same scheme.

If you, personally, are able to accept, by a reasoned act of choice, the fundamental idea of the Christian religion, namely, the divine government of the world, you will, I believe, eventually accept the view that the Catholic Church most truly embodies that idea. A man of your intellect and insight will not, I am sure, be arrested by objections of detail which arrest cruder minds. You are aware that the chief practical ends of our religion are—(1) to form a common bond between persons of all times, races, degrees of education, temperaments, ways of thought, and even, according to our faith, between the living and the departed; and (2) to afford the best channels for those feelings of adoration, hope, and love, by which, as a poet has said, we live; and (3) by greatest union in prayer, to draw down most effectually the streams of grace to water this dry and thirsty earth. No

Church which aspires to this can be exactly the same to all men. The wise Christian will not take offence when he sees that the Church, which can feed him with strong meat, gives milk to her simple babes. He will see that the Church, like her Divine Master, can only teach the people by parables and images. We hold up to the people, humbly believing ourselves in that which we teach, Jesus Christ and His pure mother, and the saints ; but those who have ears to hear and eyes to see, can penetrate into the deeper mysteries covered by these beautiful visibilities. "*Ave Maria, gratiâ plena, Dominus tecum. Benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus.*" It can be nothing but good that an Irish peasant girl kneeling in a church should say these words again and again, while the chaste and lofty ideal sinks into her heart. But the Christian philosopher kneeling humbly beside her will not only by the words be brought in remembrance of the Jewish maiden and her Divine Son, to whom we owe such inestimable benefits. The words will bring to his mind their inner sense of the continued and repeated re-birth of the divine life in individual souls

and in the whole universe. He will think of the creative power inflowing into the first nature so far purified that it can receive it, the seed of divine life uniting with the natural life. He will adore nature at its purest and highest, fertilised by the supreme life, and bringing it forth again into the world. "*Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.*" The words will be all to him that they are to the peasant girl, and far more also. I might speak in the same way of the outer and inner meaning of the Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection, but the train of thought has no doubt already occurred to you. I should not, of course, write like this to every one, but I have no fear that you will misinterpret my words.

I found the other day in a book by a French writer (in which I should not have expected to find it), the following passage, which struck me :—

"Do you wish to know what is the true religion? Seek for that which *realises* the most in the divine order ; that which humanises God and divinises men ; that which preserves intact the triune dogma ; which incarnates

the Word in making the most ignorant see and touch God; that, in short, of which the doctrine is suitable to all, and which can adapt itself to all; the religion which has allegories and images for children, a high philosophy for grown men, sublime hopes and sweet consolations for the old."

Certainly, one would say, only a religion having this scope can be considered a Catholic or Universal religion, binding together in a single fraternal society, persons of all classes, countries, races, languages, times, and degrees of education and intellect, and preserving and handing down the most profound conceptions, without breaking the bond of charity and common action and worship, and without destroying those warm, living, and concrete beliefs which are the roots of devoted affection, effort, and self-sacrifice. "*Non autem habent Dei caritatem qui ecclesie non diligunt unitatem,*" says St. Augustine. There can be a true unity of will, because will is the same force in all. But there can be no exact unity of understanding, since no two persons have the same brain, or therefore see the same thing in exactly the same

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way. Therefore the society of the Catholic Church, so fruitful in good, would be impossible unless the wise would forego their power of criticising the simplicity of the simple. We hold that charity and union are the essentials, and that, intellectually, souls must have liberty to approach to the truth in one visible and organic communion, but in divers ways. Here on earth the wisest of us see but dimly. "The best in this kind are but as shadows," one might say of our definitions and doctrines as well as of our rites and acts of worship. But love, fraternity, charity—these are realities, the only truly known realities; to these things the Catholic Church clings with a kind of desperate attachment; for these it willingly has undergone every kind of imputation from those who care little for charity, but think that an exact line of demarcation can be drawn between the province of the intellectually true and false.

How beautifully does the Church chant in Passion Week: "*Ubi caritas, et amor, ibi Deus est. Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor. Ne nos mente dividamur caveamus.*"

In order to dwell together in earthly States

or cities, men must forego the exercise of a certain kind of individual liberty which they might have had did they dwell savagely apart. So also, in the spiritual city, they must, if they would secure the blessings of peace and common action, and enjoy the highest spiritual freedom, make surrender of some lower freedom in expression of thought.

The Catholic Church has uniformity in diversity. It is like a vast cathedral with choir and nave, and aisles, and transepts, crypt and cloisters, and many chapels, yet with a unity of its own, and with one high altar at which the great acts of central worship are performed. You may, if you choose, wander through the dim places, and kneel before this altar or that image, so long as you share in the central adoration; or you may, if you please, cleave to that alone.

Nowhere is liberty so well reconciled with order as in the spiritual city. I invite you to enter, not only that you may have more order, but that you may have more real liberty of thought and feeling. In the political world there is no true liberty without the security

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and protection given by order. So also it is in the spiritual world. The *Pax Romana* is in the spiritual sphere that which the *Pax Britannica* is in the secular. As in India the British rule has suppressed robber chiefs and races, so the Catholic Church contends against intellectual marauders, and petty tyrants, and heresies, in order that the spiritual civilisation may flourish.

Only in the Catholic Church can be at all fully realised the highest social ideal, that of men living together as brethren and fellow-citizens in a single world-wide and yet organically united and living society. Independent national or racial Churches, whether Russian or English, can indeed, like independent nations, enter into alliances, and have more or less friendly relations with one another. They can never have organic unity like that which one member of a living body has with another. Yet was it to anything less than this that our Lord pointed, or St. Paul?

I have already written at too great length, and I will say no more at present, but I do believe, my dear Mr. Bevor, that it is the will

of God that you should some day, and in His own time, enter the Catholic Church. You will be weary of wandering—in youth a not unpleasing excitement—from place to place, through mountains, and deserts, and enticing plains in the spiritual regions, and will find your last home and abiding-place in the City of Peace, the New Jerusalem on earth, and with joy she will receive you, and, I trust, many others of our noble English race.

You will allow me, as an old man, to add that so long as I live I shall ever take the utmost interest in your history and spiritual welfare.—I remain, very sincerely yours,

OSWALD GERARD, S.J.

Gerald Beechcroft had been at Eton with Bertram Bevor, and had thence gone to Cambridge. He possessed a property in Kent, and had for a space sat in Parliament, and had travelled. His line of life had hardly run parallel with Bevor's, and they had not frequently met; but when they did meet, each felt more disposed to talk intimately to the



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other than he did to persons with whom he was in frequent intercourse. Though the outer course of their lives was different, each felt that the other was travelling by much the same road of mental development, and meeting with the same spiritual adventures.

This was Gerald Beechcroft's letter:—

ESTLING, ASHFORD, KENT,

28th April 1898.

DEAR BEVOR,

I felt interest, but no surprise, when I saw in the *Times* that you had joined the Catholic Church. It seems to me a very natural place for you to inhabit. I remembered various conversations which we had had which seemed to point to this conclusion. Some years ago I should have felt much surprised if I could have suddenly foreseen that I should myself have one day felt attracted towards that Church; yet it is the fact that at intervals during the last two or three years I have been sensible of the attraction. I hope that it will not bore you to read that which I am about to write at some

length, for I feel inclined to inflict upon you my spiritual history. This will enable me to clear my own mind, and I should like to know, of course in as general a way as you please, whether at all the same kind of process has gone on in you.

At Eton I was, as I suppose almost all Eton boys are, or at any rate then were, perfectly orthodox and unquestioning, receiving no real religious instruction from tutors and masters, but unconsciously inspired in the daily chapel services with the spirit of the Anglican Church. I imagine that, however deeply one became either a free-thinker or a Roman Catholic, no one who had, during the impressionable years of youth, been a constant attendant in a college chapel or a cathedral, could ever, even if he so desired, shake off the haunting charm of the choral English service. The very spirit or distinctive essence of the Church of England dwells in its evensong. I remember often, when we were boys, seeing you in St. George's Chapel at Windsor, at vespers. Hardly any of our school-fellows dreamt of forsaking for this purpose the cricket or football field, or river, and even then

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I felt in you a kindred spirit. How lovely it was on a winter evening, when one passed out of the darkness outside into the dim light of the nave, and thence into the choir softly lit with a double row of tapers. The light gleamed upon the brazen tablets in the stalls of the *nobles et puissants princes*, the Companions of the Garter, and upon the mysterious helmets and swords and banners above; the chanting rose and fell in melodious undulations, and seemed to weave together a great historic past and an indefinite future, the dead, the living, and those yet to come. It is a perfect kind of religious music, enabling the soul to re-collect itself. Occasionally now I go over to Canterbury Cathedral for no reason but to hear it, sitting in the dim light, outside the choir, so that I can hear the sound without seeing the inadequately beautiful human instruments.

In this way Eton continued my home religious education, which was neither ritualistic nor evangelical, and in this respect was that of most Englishmen of the upper classes. Did it ever occur to you how much the future of the Church of England is influenced by the kind

of religious impression made upon boys at Eton? Nowhere is there so large a number of future bestowers of benefices, and even of bishoprics, gathered together. Only imagine the uproar there would be throughout the United Kingdom if the Provost and Headmaster of Eton announced their intention of introducing "mass" according to the "use of St. Alban's, Holborn," and of making confession part of the school discipline. Lord Salisbury once said in a speech in Parliament that there were three schools in the Church of England, to wit, the Sacramental, the Emotional, and the Philosophical. I should be puzzled to say in the spirit of which of these schools I had been educated. My Anglican education was, in one sense, continued at Cambridge in the stately Chapel of King's College. But at Cambridge I found myself in the midst of the "Liberal thought" which has always been dominant at our University, where, as you know, we educated the Cranmers, Riddleys, and Latimers, whom you burnt at Oxford. Darwin and Herbert Spencer were the Cambridge deities of my day—we were in full tide of the Evolution movement. Christian doctrine and philosophy had no in-

fluence at all—were hardly so much as mentioned in the “intellectual set” among whom I lived. I went with the stream, dropt my boyish Conservatism and orthodoxy, and became, or thought that I became, a Liberal in politics, and a free-thinker or agnostic in religion. I ceased to attend, except for the sake of the aforesaid soothing, rather drowsy charm, chapel or church, and forsook altogether for many years the rite of communion.

I lived afterwards in London in much the same way, absorbed in politics and amusements. Only my political Liberalism did not survive three years of London life. I was convinced that Conservatism was the more based on philosophic principles. I was the better sure of this, because the most profound metaphysician among my Cambridge friends, after retiring for three years to study philosophy in a Riviera villa, emerged from it as convinced a Conservative, upon the deepest grounds, as the most unphilosophical major in the United Services Club, and went into Parliament as such. I followed his example, as you know, and for a time I represented most respectably in the House of Commons the electors of

a small and undistinguished borough. My constituents really were the stupidest set of men whom I ever met, and at the end of five years they dismissed me from their service. My agent told me that my speeches were "too much above their heads." These five years were almost a blank for me in the way of spiritual life. No occupation, perhaps, is so intellectually dissipating as that of being a member of Parliament, and most of those engaged in it are reduced by the time they are fifty to the merest phenomenal existence. But during the last year of this London Parliamentary life two things happened to me. One of these was the death of my sister, a being of the most singular charm and sweetness, who had been the delight of all my earlier life. For the first time since my second term at Cambridge I partook of Holy Communion—by her death-bed—and I saw in it a meaning which I had never seen before. Nor, since I saw, that last week of her life, the spirit purified by long suffering shining through those mortal eyes so soon about to be closed for ever, and heard the clear tones of her voice bravely joining in the responses,

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could I ever again doubt that, in some sense, the soul is immortal, and that death has no dominion over it. Even before this my doubts were but superficial on this point. "*Sentimus experimurque nos aeternos esse*," says Spinoza. But I became convinced that in some way identity continues as well as mere existence. The other event was the culmination and rupture of an attachment which had for some years bound me to a beautiful and passionate woman of the world. She was unhappy in her marriage, and, as usual, her unhappiness and disquiet disturbed others. I never could quite bring myself to pluck the fruit of this amour. It hung for a good two years within my easy reach, but something stronger than my desire held me back.

About the time that my sister died, and my Parliamentary career came to an end, events placed a thousand leagues of sea between me and this woman, whose image ceased to haunt me much when the square of distance was so greatly increased, nor did I desire to follow her, nor for certain reasons could I well do so. Thus I found myself at a crisis in my life. My sweetest and oldest friend, my sister, was dead ;

the attachment which had held my affections for a long time was broken, and I had lost my seat in Parliament, and had no fixed profession or occupation. About this time, when in London, I frequented the services of the Church of England, especially the beautiful Sunday choral communion at St. Paul's Cathedral, which seemed to express for me very exactly my feelings and vague desires. I saw there, habitual worshippers, three or four men and women whom I had come across in London society, and had supposed to be indifferent to religion, and I wondered what community of disaster had made us meet at the foot of the altar. My doctrinal views at this time were of the vaguest kind, but I seemed to find in this worship refreshment for weariness, and food for my hungry and unsatisfied affections. I took the sacrament itself for whatever it might be worth, I felt refreshment, and was troubled by no desire of dogmatic definition.

Later on, as you know, I travelled for about two years in the East, especially in India. I was tired to death of politics, foreign and imperial as well as domestic, and was chiefly



interested in India by the strange religious atmosphere in which I found myself. I often thought that the whole population seemed to live in a kind of trance or dream, and that either they must be mad, or I. What was the meaning of these temples and sacred rivers, these hermits and self-tormenting fakirs, these strange chanting processions, these monstrous idols and curiously carved symbols? I wandered about the plains and cities for a cold-weather season contemplating these things, and in the spring went up into Kashmir, carrying with me a number of books about Hindu philosophy and religion. I also had with me a few books of Christian mysticism. I spent months in study of this kind, in my boat on the river and lakes, or camped upon some green plateau high up in the surrounding mountains. Here the Church of England seemed dim and distant; the influence of St. Paul's Cathedral did not reach to the Himalayas. The English churches which I had seen in India seemed as much out of place as the English bishops. Once I went into a Roman Catholic church at Calcutta, and could not help feeling that

its atmosphere was more akin to the genius of India.

My comparative studies of Hindu and Christian mysticism brought me to this. It seemed to me that all religions were like roads converging to a single point, or that religion as a whole was like a mountain peak, the base of which at one side was far distant from the base on the other, but those who mounted it from either side were brought nearer and nearer, and met at last upon the highest point. The end of all religions was, it seemed to me, attainment to a certain perfect peace and joy, only possible for those who renounced their own self-existence, and thus overcame "the world." To indicate the way to this state, or to afford assistance for arriving there, was clearly not the prerogative of any one religion. The Christian mystic might aim at perfect identification of his will with that of God, the Buddhist speak of merging his life in nothingness, the orthodox Hindu of the ultimate return of the perfect to the Supreme One, as drops of water to the sea; these were but different modes of expressing the same psychological fact. I had

a volume or two of the greatest of English mystics, William Law. It seemed to me that although he introduces the definite dogmas of Christianity, they were really not necessary for his own system, and that he could have built it without them. Later on, when I returned to Europe, I read the works of Schopenhauer, and saw how he expressed clearly my own confused speculations in Kashmir. The essence of man, according to him, is the will-to-live, and all suffering is due to this will fighting against resistance, and that is, fighting against itself as manifested in other men and in all nature. But knowledge of self, when attained, whether through meditation, or, more commonly, through suffering, acts as a *quieter* to this will, destroys its motives, and leads in a mysterious way, which can be stated but not explained, to the denial of the will by itself. Since all suffering is due to the operation of the will, such denial, in so far as it is complete, destroys all suffering. Hence the peace and joy of the saints in all times and countries and religions. This is salvation. But the different religions have invented, each for itself, an imaginary *rationale*

of this process. Hence the differences of creeds among the highest races of the world, who have got beyond the mere religions of fear and terror.

In somewhat this stage of thought was I when I returned to Europe, except that I could not, like Schopenhauer, forego the idea of "Our Father who art in heaven." I rather followed the thought derived by William Law from Jacob Böhmen, that all nature is a desire or want, and is self-tormenting so long as this desire is shut up and without an outlet, and does not find satisfaction or purification in union with the plenitude of the Divine Being of God. I believed that God, the spiritual centre, was the true end of every man's desire; and that all misery and suffering arose from the misdirection of desire, and that the work of Jesus Christ was by His life and death to re-direct desire to its true centre. The sages of the East, I thought, had discovered the road to true felicity, but had erred in holding up as an explanation or ideal the extinction instead of the conversion of desire, or will, or life.

In this frame of mind I returned to England,

and a year or two later I married, as you know, and have since lived mostly at my own home in Kent, but partly in London. I have been almost perfectly happy in my married life, and I see that a contented marriage is a great safeguard against the distractions of the world of sense and ambition. It clears the mind, and makes one see in truer proportions the comparative value of different things in life. I wish that you also were married, my dear Bevor; few men need marriage more than you do, or would make better husbands or fathers. Was it not rather dangerous, moreover, to become a Catholic without first trying the experiment of marriage? How know you that the inclinations which moved you were not really the desire for a home under disguise? The home-sickness which leads men to marriage is very like the home-sickness which leads them to the Catholic Church, and it is partly perhaps for this reason that many persons, solitary, perforce, in life, become Catholics.

Yet I cannot say that in my own case marriage ended everything as completely and happily as it does in the old-fashioned British

three-volume novel. I have often felt that it should have done so. When I come in on a winter afternoon after riding or wood-cutting in the healthiest air in the world, assume slippered and velvet-coated ease, and see the bright tea-table, the light falling on the mellow-bound books of the library, the logs merrily burning, the curtains drawn, and my wife and my two little daughters, I think that there should be nothing left in the world for me to desire. I should be happier, I often imagine, did I more nearly resemble Montaigne, if I closed the great questions as hopeless riddles, accepted life as it is, with its comfort and amusement, beauties of nature and pastimes, books and pictures and curiosities, its excellent wines, fruits, and tobacco, and, above all, the delightful oddities of fellow-beings. In the last months of my long Eastern wanderings I pictured myself living like this at Estling, managing the estate, helping poor neighbours a little, bringing up children, and not troubling myself further with adventures in either politics, travel, the passions, or the field of thought. I remember the exact look of the place at the far side of an exceedingly long

and trying Himalayan snow pass, where the conviction flashed upon me that the true life was that, and no other. And it is quite true that I feel no desire, at least hardly ever, to re-enter the field of politics, or to be involved in any affair of the heart, or to travel. I am almost forty, and perhaps decline of youthful vigour accounts for this indisposition to new enterprise. I know that when I happen to be in London in the summer, I see the electric light on the top of Westminster Tower without a pang. I remember the important feeling with which I used to enter those sacred precincts in my first session. I remember also the feelings with which, as a boy of seventeen, I first donned the scarlet colours of our glorious house football team; and do what I can, I cannot get it out of my head that one achievement and position was intrinsically no greater than the other. How does the relative importance of things seem to a man of eighty, who sees men who are his juniors by twenty or thirty years become Archbishops, and Prime Ministers, and Lord Chancellors, and Viceroys? Much as the school heroes seem to the man of forty, I suspect.

In matters, then, of the phenomenal or exterior world, my marriage and home life have made me almost as philosophical as I anticipated. Not so in the world of thought. *There* I am an Ulysses who cannot rest in Ithaca, or a Don Quixote after his first long excursion. In the sphere of thought and religion I have too little Montaigne about me for my comfort, and too much Pascal. I have told you that I came back from India inclined to a vague mysticism which contained, I thought, the essence of the universal religion. I continued to frequent St. Paul's, but not quite with the same warmth of feeling as in the time immediately succeeding to the death of my sister and the other events which I have mentioned. Before long, satisfaction with the mystic system declined. My old ideas still seemed, and now seem, to me to be true, but not sufficient to live by. Here in Europe, and especially in the moral chaos or whirlpool called London, I felt the need of a more definite religion, a bond which drew men of all ages, classes, and degrees of education together, a visible ruling Church. I could not feel that the Church of England, in which I had



been brought up, supplied this want. I required in my heart more unity, certainty, and strength of conviction. I visited frequently the Roman Catholic churches of London with an increasing sense that there, after all, might be my true country. Exactly in the degree that I felt more at home in them I felt less at home in the English churches, especially in those where a high ritual was practised. Down here in the country I went, and still go, with regularity and even some pleasure, to our village church. Only my own household, and that of a farmer or two, and a few old labouring men and women, and the school children attend it; but I like the simple, unpretending service, and the parson is a good fellow, and preaches humble sermons, full of charity and good-will, endeavouring to make more visible scenes in the Bible, and draw mild lessons from them. I can hardly imagine that the kind of honest people who come to an English village church would be better, or happier, or more comforted than they are now, if they had any other form of the Christian religion. But in London one needs something more deep and strong, something touching more nearly

the great world history and transactions. In country life less is needed. I can quite understand why the primitive mode of religion lingered on in the villages of the old world, long after the dwellers in great sorrow-tormented cities had turned to a deeper source of refreshment.

You will think this a terribly long letter, all about myself, but I cannot now reduce the scale upon which I have begun. Never before, I assure you, have I written an epistle of this length. Never, I hope, shall I do so again. I was interrupted at this point by a visit from the local rat and mole catcher. He is no orator, and took some time to make his proposals clear. Where was I? Ah, I know. I have read a good deal, during the last year or two, of explanations of Catholic theology, and of the questions at issue between the Roman Catholic Church and (1) Protestantism generally and (2) the Church of England. The main divisions, as far as I can see, rest on the question of authority. Pure Protestantism accepts no authority except the Bible, *i.e.*, the very earliest Christian writings, and to a certain extent the pre-Christian Jewish. The

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Church of England (its main body, I mean) accepts the Bible as the supreme authority, but attaches importance to Church Councils of the first four centuries, *i.e.*, those held before the division between the Greek and Latin Churches, and the barbarian invasions. The Church centred at Rome takes as its authority its own governing body, or person, for the time being, subject to the limitation that this authority cannot reverse its own decisions given in previous ages. The Roman doctrines are built up by a process of organic growth, just as a system of jurisprudence develops in the hands of judges through centuries. The decisions of the last Vatican Council are as valid in the Roman Catholic view as those of the first Council of Jerusalem. The Church of England expressly says that all Churches (including, I suppose, itself) may err. The Church of Rome claims to be constantly guided by the Spirit of Truth, and denies that it can err. All the doctrines held by this Church are decisions upon questions in dispute at one time or another. This is true of the resurrection of the dead, the nature of Christ, transubstantia-

tion, the organ of authority in the Church. If a Protestant says, "The constitution of your Church is very different from that of the early Apostolic Church," the Catholic replies, "This argument does not affect me any more than it affects a modern Englishman to be told that the existing Parliament is very unlike the Saxon Witenagemot. The Reformers of the Church of England three hundred years ago selected from the mass of decided doctrines those which they preferred, and rejected the rest. Other Protestants made *their* selections, and rejected the rest. The Roman Church retained all existing decisions, and continued to decide and define. Thus true continuity exists in this Church, together with the living power of extension, development, and advance. The Reformers of the Church of England rejected as bad or doubtful the developments of the preceding thousand years, and denied the legitimacy of future development. Nothing, moreover, was in their opinion absolutely necessary except the Bible, in which, taken as literally inspired, individual reason might find full satisfaction." I compared this view of

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the Reformers with that given by a great German Catholic, who wrote, "*The Church is the Christian religion in its objective form—its living exposition.*" Since the word of Christ (taken in its widest sense) found, together with His Spirit, its way into a circle of men, and was received by them, it has taken shape, put on flesh and blood, and this shape is the Church, which accordingly is regarded by Catholics as the *essential form* of the Christian religion itself."

True, say the modern Anglicans; but this Church consists not of Roman Catholics, but of all who profess and call themselves Christians, or, as most Anglicans say, of all Christians obedient to an episcopacy based on apostolic succession. But a Church so enlarged seemed to me not a Church in the sense in which a State is a State, but a mere arbitrary standard of consent, which could no more satisfy me as a living and ruling authority than a poetic ideal of a mistress could satisfy a lover who longed for one embodied in flesh and blood. Others, I know, say that they feel the reality of this Catholic Church consisting of all Christians, or of all episcopal Christians.

I cannot succeed in doing so ; perhaps my mind is too realistic by nature, but so it is. I had seen, it was true, that there were mystics in all times and countries who could live the most high and holy life without the support given by a great system of religious association. The true mystic is of no Church, nor indeed of any special religion. Like the eagle he dwells in lonely heights, and in his flight soars far above the plain. He needs not association nor common worship, is independent of times and places, almost of articulate speech. I felt that this might have been in some degree possible for me if my own nature had been purer and loftier, or if, even, I could live quite outside the stream of outward existence. But I, being such as I am, and where I am, could not live in the high, light air in which the rare mystics dwell. I needed association with a great body of fellow-beings, full of faults and weakness though that body might be. It seemed to me that every living body implied four things necessary to its existence—(1) the presence of the essential spirit of life, that invisible and incomprehensible essence ; (2) a coherent skeleton or framework ; (3) a nerve

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system; (4) flesh and blood. So—to take an analogy—in a great book, or poem, or speech, there must be the animating idea, the logical construction, the connection of the parts, the beauty and clearness of wording. In an embodied religion there must be the immanent spirit of faith, the system of theology, the ecclesiastical organisation, the worship and devotion. The Church of England had all these essentials, but, as I thought, rather in a weak and ailing way, inadequate, at any rate, to the ideal which presented itself to my mind. Nor could I be satisfied with a Church which extended its claim only to a nation, race, or empire. It seemed to me that the Church centred at Rome alone, far of course from perfectly, but yet in some measure, realises the idea of a Church extending itself to all countries, races, languages, and generations. Visible unity seemed to me of the essence of the Christian Church in idea, and its chief utility, so far as realised, in practice. But there can be no real unity without a centre of unity, only separate unities round separate centres. There might indeed be much in common, just as there is, in other ways, much in common

among civilised nations, but that is another matter.

I have told you how that I passed through phases of Western free thought, and Eastern or universal mysticism. I now believe that absolute truth is beyond the reason of man to achieve, or his language to express. I think that Kant proved, if indeed it needed proving, that our reasoning faculty is by its very nature only competent to deal with the relations of phenomena towards one another, and that it cannot understand the essential or real nature of things. Then for any knowledge we may have of God and of our real selves we are driven back from reason upon instinct or feeling. We come to Pascal's "Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas," and his "C'est le cœur qui sent Dieu et pas la raison. Voilà ce que c'est que la foi; Dieu sensible au cœur, non à la raison." I believe that the purest Christian religion is but the highest idolatry, in the strict sense of that word, that is to say, worship of the felt but incomprehensible God through the highest form, and that all doctrines are but lower steps in the infinite ladder of intelligence. Religion on earth



can but serve to bind men together in the bonds of charity and fraternity, and to enable them to express the feelings of the heart turned towards God. The best Church, or embodiment of religion, is that which best conduces towards these ends.

This is the *intellectual* position which I have reached. There is no doubt that for a very large central body of English people the national Church, moulded as it is by the national character, and again moulding it, is the best and most satisfying expression of religion. They would, as they are now, be neither better nor happier elsewhere. In Scotland the same thing is probably true of the Presbyterian Church. No one can appreciate better than I do the goodness and merits of the Anglican Church. I owe to it much in my boyhood. For a short period in my mature life, before my journey to the East, it gave to me also all that I then desired. But I am no longer the same person. I feel that my true country, my final country, is the Catholic Church centred at Rome, and that all other forms of thought and religion, however good in themselves, and however good

they then were for me, and however good they now are for others, were but resting-places upon my journey homewards. I see many *details* in the doctrine and practices of that central Church to which not only my reason but my feeling objects. But I am drawn towards that Church as a *Whole*, in spite of these; just as a provincial man might be attracted towards London by its magnitude, and interest, and universality, in spite of its fogs, and impurities, and vices, and other drawbacks from which his native town, let us say a nice clean Cheltenham, was free. And this drawing, or attraction, or desire, has steadily increased during the last three or four years. Slight at first and rare were its visitings, but now at times it is strong as a passion. The influence comes in waves of increasing volume. I suppose that a really stout Protestant (or perhaps a scientific physiologist) would say that it is of the same nature as the enchantments exercised by a human siren, and that the Roman Church enchants men as Vivien did Merlin, by a hypnotising power. "Trust me all in all, or not at all." But can a Church be at once a wicked siren or Circe, and the

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mother of so many of the holiest lives and so much of the noblest devotion? It does not animalise men. I cannot but remember that the Christian religion was denounced by its earliest opponents as a ruinous superstition.

It is true, I think, that the Catholic Church has in itself the power of a mighty lover.

*Amor ch' a null' amato amar perdona—*

“Love that exempts none who is loved from loving in return”—profound and terrible words of Dante. Sometimes I read the theological controversy of the day with the feeling of wandering amid unrealities. I see that able and learned Protestant writers most conclusively prove Roman divergencies from Scriptural and other early authority; I see that writers of the “natural history of religions” school make out an excellent case against the special supernatural character of the Christian religion; but both seem to me—lost in their intellectual attack—not to be defending that which the Catholic Church in its turn assails. They reason and argue when the real attack of their common opponent is

made on the heart, not on the brain. The Catholic Church also reasons, but it relies for victory upon prayer, that is to say, upon desire or will to win souls, a desire or will multitudinous, yet disciplined to act collectively, and skilfully directed to its end. This is the faith which moves hearts, if not mountains.

If you ask me why I do not, like you (if that report is correct), join the Catholic Church, I can only answer that I still fear to take a step so irremediable and decisive. I do not know how far I am influenced by my worldly interest and convenience. Naturally that must in some degree hold me back. Certainly I should have been happier if this inclination had never come upon me, happier after a fashion at least, but I fail to see at what point I could have resisted it or driven it back. "*Vestigia nulla retrorsum.*" In religion one cannot return upon one's footsteps, any more than in a human affection. Friendship may lead to passion, but not passion to friendship. At a certain psychological point, perhaps, a man can only choose between the Catholic Church and entire rejection of super-

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natural Christianity. Do you remember your Virgil?

Nox ruit, Ænea, nos flendo ducimus horas ;  
Hic locus est partes ubi se via findit in ambas ;  
Dextera, quæ Ditis magni sub mœnia tendit ;  
Hac iter Elysium nobis ; at læva malorum  
Exercet pœnas, et ad impia Tartara mittit.

These lines ring at times in my mind. What a singular power has Virgil of intimating more than he expresses. This we did not perceive when we read him at Eton, because we were ignorant of life.

I owe you a thousand apologies for the length, and perhaps the nature, of this unconscionable letter. I do not ask you to give me an account of your own Pilgrim's Progress, unless you feel disposed to set it down in writing for your own satisfaction. In any case you must be in the mood to hear with interest of the travels of another through somewhat the same regions, though by another road. One place certainly we have both passed through and left behind us, namely, the City of Vanity.—Believe me, ever sincerely yours,

GERALD BEECHCROFT.

Dr. Magnusson was another Berkshire neighbour in whom Bertram Bevor felt some interest. He was a man now about sixty years old, who had, it was understood, been married, but had lost his wife after a very few years, long ago. His account of himself was that he had practised in London as a physician till he was nearly fifty, and had then resolved to spend the rest of his days in a country life. He had taken a small farm, and had let all the land to an adjacent farmer, except an orchard and a large garden near the house. He had fitted up the barn as a chemical laboratory, and spent much of his time in experiments there, and in cultivating the garden and orchard with the help of one boy. He said that his chemical work was chiefly directed towards the discovery of better methods of applying chemistry to agriculture. He was supposed to read a good deal in winter evenings, but Bevor, glancing over the book-shelves, had not seen more than two or three hundred volumes. They seemed to be mostly on medicine, science, and abstruse books, old and new, dealing with magic and

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spiritualism. Dr. Magnusson had a rather dubious reputation in his neighbourhood. Curates shook their heads over him, or relapsed into meaning silence when his name was mentioned. This was partly due to his chemical laboratory, but more to the fact that he did not attend any church or chapel. Yet he was kind and charitable, subscribed well to philanthropic institutions, and it was known that the poor never resorted to him in vain in their distress. Dr. Magnusson had a fine forehead, slightly grey hair and beard, and a keen yet gentle expression in his dark eyes. This was his letter:—

GREENACRE FARM,

*April 1898.*

DEAR MR. BEVOR,

In order that, when we meet again, it may be without any misunderstanding or embarrassment, I should like to say that if the report which I hear is true, the fact that you have become a Roman Catholic will make no difference whatever in my feelings towards

you. That is one road of life. It has been taken by men in the past and the present for whom I have a high esteem. Possibly some men are led by a purely reasoning process to become Roman Catholics. I doubt whether that is your case. I should imagine that you have fallen in love with the Church. Shall we say that love reveals, or deludes? Two men see one woman. To one she may appear to be an ordinary, more or less agreeable person; to the other an angel under the veil of flesh. Is the immortal and heavenly soul in her revealed to the lover because he loves her, and hidden from the other? Perhaps the lover sees in her not what she is, in our sense of the word "is," but the (Platonic) idea of her is for the moment made manifest to him—that which she might be—or indeed *really* is.

The charm of the Roman Catholic Church to many of the finest souls lies, I think, much in the very definite, complete, and formal surrender which she requires from those who desire to enter. To submit oneself to that Church is a great act of self-humiliation and abnegation of pride. This is why it is tempting. The



whole essence of conversion or regeneration lies in the return to humility from pride. One of my books says, "Could you but see what a sweet transforming power there is in humility!" and again, "Pride must die in you, or nothing of Heaven can live in you." Outward acts mould inward feelings. Men who submit to the Catholic Church pass through the valley of humiliation, and begin from the beginning like a child. This is a definite outward act of dying to one's old life. It is a definite beginning of a new external life. Thus it may easily, and often does, coincide with the one true conversion, that of the inward self; but not always, or of necessity. The journey lies from the life of self-will to the life of harmony with the will of God. The road lies through suffering, and humiliation, and death, and new birth, and gradual growth in the new life. One arrives at a true relation to the Divine Centre. In that lies joy and peace. This is the end of all the desire of the spiritual and material universe. To belong to a communion of men may aid; it is not essential. Religion in its essence is a simple matter, as simple as the turning of a

flower towards the sun to feed on light and heat. God is the source of all light and heat, whether of this world or spiritual. He does not shine on this field alone, or on that flower border, though some may lie better than others to receive the light and heat. I do not say that for you and others, given a certain mental history and position, it may not have become necessary to pass by way of the Church. To join the Roman Catholic Church may be your only way of liberating your mind from questions, and enabling it to continue on its journey towards the City of Peace. It may have become necessary to pass through Rome on your way to Jerusalem. I know you well enough to believe that you, at least, will not imagine that you have finished the journey when you have arrived at Rome. Surrender your intellect if you will. It is an act of individual agnosticism ; it may come as the last term of scepticism—this surrender. I, who also deeply distrust the power of the intellect to do more than investigate phenomenal relations, cannot blame you, so long as your heart also does not end its journey. Press on all the more ardently towards the Centre of Desire.

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To me your road has not been a necessity. I have thought it desirable to avoid even looking with pleasure towards the Catholic Church. If the imagination dwells with pleasure upon the image of anything, that image obtains a magical influence over the will, until the will is no longer free. Contemplation of anything short of the divine perfection may be dangerous, and may lengthen the journey. The desire of the soul turned towards God, that is the one way of salvation for all men, whether they are Christians, or Jews, or Mohammedans, or Hindus, or Buddhists. In this way alone, by the soul's surrender of its self to God, as a woman surrenders her body to her lover, can the new life of God grow in the soul. A Buddhist who takes this way attains to salvation; a baptized Christian who receives the sacrament every week, but does not take this way, does not attain to salvation. Religion is the union of God and the soul. The Higher desires the lower, that it may manifest itself. The lower desires the Higher, that it may be free from the anguish of desire and may bring forth new life. One sees by the

ancient liturgies that the early Christians held the great ideas—Light shining in darkness; the death and revivification of the world; the universal and eternal process of incarnation; eternal realities behind the veil of the seen.

The great mystical teachers teach always the same thing, the ever-living, all-pervading divine life—no figure of speech, but an actual thing. They often call it “Christ.” Think of it, if you will, as emanating from Jesus Christ as the sun-rays from the sun. The sun is the medium of light and heat to our system. On this divine life, this one actual existing substance, we have to feed; we must draw it into ourselves till our souls become transmuted into its essence, and our bodies and intellects become mere accidents to this substance. This is the bread of heaven. True prayer is not the repetition of words, but the act of feeding upon this. So to feed is the meaning of faith. It is this which if we seek we shall find. This is the bread with which our Father will feed His children, for which we ask in the Lord’s Prayer, our “daily bread.” “This is the record,” says St. John, “that God hath given to us

eternal life; and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life."

Protestant Churches have strayed far from the mystery and wonder of religion. They have taken the Bible too literally and rationally. They have lost the universal meaning, and have forgotten that no religion is worth anything unless it is a religion founded upon the true nature of man. They *tend* to be mere ethical, social, civic associations, lost in the mirage of the world-illusion. This appears in their ideas as to religious worship. True symbolism is that which represents the feeding on divine life. True worship is that which embodies this mystery. It does not consist in a congregational repeating of prayers or singing of hymns, or in listening to moral advice from a pulpit. This may be well in its time and its place, but the central adoration should continually set forth the spiritual feeding upon the divine life, and the surrender of the soul to the divine influence. Words, music, solemn motions, should aid us to re-collect and isolate the soul—for this is necessary—and to

escape from the thoughts and sensations of the outer world and lower phenomenal life.

A candle shining in the darkness of a temple teaches better than any words the doctrine of the Light which shone (and shines) in darkness. But we light rows of gas-jets, well typifying the lights of the world.

The Catholic Church avoids these errors, and maintains the ever-true mystery, and to those who can understand teaches well by symbols. But then this Church has confused the symbols with the essence, or thing signified. Priests are carried away by their profession. They exaggerate their own importance. They teach, or are inclined to teach, that *only* through *their* administration of the sacrament can man feed on divine life. They make these sacraments not signs or symbols, but the thing in itself. This affirmation tends to be a denial of all other feeding. They are inclined to deny that feeding can be outside as well as inside a certain act. Various bodies of Christians are even taught to deny the validity of this act outside their own pale. Roman Catholics deny the validity of Anglican sacraments. One section of Anglicans,

I believe, denies the validity of the Presbyterian or Lutheran rite. While all this is so, it is, I think, desirable that some, like myself, should remain outside the Churches, to uphold the larger belief.

Faith is a strong desire, like the stream of a river seeking the ocean. But all Churches are tempted to divert the stream, to make it turn their own mills. Faith is a hunger and thirst; but Churches with their rites, and ceremonies, and church-going, may divert the hunger and thirst to something which is like the real food, but is not the real food. The Churches tend to turn out nominal Christians, too easily satisfied, with no real experience.

Understand me rightly. I have no wish that all, or even that many, should follow my example and remain outside the Churches. I recognise the immense value of the bond of association, of decision of unprofitable and schism-creating questions by authority, of the organised fight against materialism, of the assistance given to the weak and the ignorant. I admit that it is possible that the Church may in time be able to impart to its masses the wider and

deeper doctrines even now held by its philosophers. But there is always a danger of petrification, and I think it good that, till a fuller revealing shall come, some men should stand outside.

In any case, this is the conviction to which I came twenty years ago, and I cannot now depart from it. I have had my share in the costly teaching of experience. I have loved deeply, and lost. I have known pride, and ambition, and anger, and envy, and hatred. I have sinned much. Through all this I have lived, and I have come into peaceful waters at last. I think that my safety from utter shipwreck is due partly to the fact that I have never been without work which employed my best faculties, and associated me closely to the life of others, and enabled me to do them some service. But I ascribe my spiritual happiness and peace of mind to the true knowledge of the meaning of life. I was led to knowledge by suffering. When I had reached the lowest point of despair and torment my eyes were opened by a most true interpreter.

There is but one fundamental truth in philo-



sophy, namely, that the visible is the manifestation of the invisible. The power of God moves and stirs in all that we call nature. The lovely cherry blossom on the bough is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual power, and so are the drifting forms of the clouds, or the song of birds, or the bodies of children, or the look of affection in the eyes of a friend. By strong insight—faith—the presence of God in all things is made manifest, as much as it is, to the believer, in the sacrament. “If thou eatest a piece of bread,” says Paracelsus, “thou dost taste therein heaven and earth, and all the stars,” all the influences which have begotten the mysterious life under the appearance of the bread, which from it passes into your life. There is no body without a spirit. All is in everything. If men will remember these high truths and not narrow down the Divine Presence on earth to churches or altars, I care not to what Church they belong. But idolatry consists in localising the Divine Presence, and of this we have to beware. We must see and worship God in all things and through all things, and feed on Him at all times

and in all places in our hearts. God is not here or there only in this world; He is neither at "this mountain, nor at Jerusalem," nor upon Catholic altars, only. The reality, the real presence, lies behind, or is interfused with, all that we call material. It is no less existent everywhere around us and within us than it is in the bread consecrated by the priest. I do not say that the force of united faith may not have a power of evocation of the real presence. Science has only begun to sound the depths of the power of the human will and imagination. For a moment, the moment when wills combine, strange mysteries may take place—for the moment—until the combination is broken, and that which for the moment may have penetrated is again latent. But all this is dangerous ground. That which is certain is that men can feed upon the divine life at all times and at all places. For this we have the testimony of the lives of the saints of all the Churches, and even of some who have belonged to no Church.

My days pass on in this corner of the world. As I worked in my garden this morning I paused awhile to rest, in a pleasant shelter by

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the hedge, near the old cherry-tree, which is just now in full blossom. The sky was of the clearest blue, the sunshine was warm, the air sweet, a pleasant savour seemed to rise from the new-dug earth, a nightingale sang divinely near me. All nature seemed to be young and to rejoice. I grow old, and am often weary, yet I rejoiced also in sympathy with the joy of the spring-renewed world. I think that as my outer man decays, my inner man is made new. I feel younger now in spirit than I did when I was forty, in the midst of my London work, and when I was disturbed by doubts and questions. For this, and for all His mercies, I praise and bless the Lord and Giver of life, of love, and of death.

I hope that when you return to Denham you will come over some day and talk to me.—Believe me, yours sincerely,

CHARLES MAGNUSSON.

When Bertram had first glanced through the letters before opening them, he had seen one in a fine and singular handwriting, very familiar

and dear to him, and had placed it aside to read when he had finished the rest. It was from a young and lovely woman, born of an ancient Catholic family, and married five years earlier into another, by whose voice, and form, and soul he was continually haunted. Ever, at moments when his attention was not occupied elsewhere, there returned to his mental vision those dark eyes, those movements instinct with a natural unconscious grace, recalling now those of a child, now those of a beautiful fawn moving through forest glades; that voice with many tones and meanings, the instrument of music ranging through all the shades of emotion, and interpreting instantly and exactly each varied mood of a passionate and sensitive nature. She was one of those persons inspired, it would seem, by so peculiar and distinctive a spirit, that every look and motion stands out from the background of the commonplace looks and motions of the mass of men and women. How Bertram could in imagination see her as she sat, or rose, or moved; the turn of her neck that

autumn evening as she stood by the fire; the line of her figure that June morning as she bent to pick that rose—that rose so burning red—in the old walled garden; the dusky half ringlet curling below her ear the same evening, on the river; the something in her dark eyes that April day when they rode together. And that moonlight evening in July so hot, when she broke away from the close rooms, and stood on the terrace in her white dress, lovely in the pale light, a bit of syringa flower in her hand, and seemed to will him to follow her, and gave him the twig of syringa to smell, with a quick movement of her beautiful hand and arm; and her step as they went side by side along the terrace, and some way down the dark avenue; and her silence, and the sudden look from her eyes, given and withdrawn as they turned—from all these occasions, and a hundred others compounded, arose an invisible presence which followed Bertram, and at times seemed to press upon his consciousness with almost unbearable force. Of such things is passion

made; yet it was not passion that Bertram felt for his invisible neighbour, but rather pity. He felt as if she were a princess, confined within the limits of a walled park and garden, and restlessly desiring to break through them, and forming images of a world beyond which was far other than the existing world, and as if he alone had the key of the gate, and could let her out if he chose, but would not, because he knew the outer world, and yet felt continually, by sympathy and imagination, her craving, and impatience, and desire, and was himself disturbed by it, and made less happy, and contented, and serene. All this feeling once more came over his mind as he opened the letter and read:—

GLENDINNING TOWER,  
NORTHUMBERLAND,  
*Sunday Evening, 28th April, 10 P.M.*

They all say that you have joined the Church, but I do not believe it. We have spoken of religion sometimes together, and I never have thought that you would become a Catholic—

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not yet, at least. You are too hesitating, you do not like to let yourself go, or to commit yourself to a course. Something would always, unless you are changed, come between you and final action. You would not swim a river while you thought there might be a ford somewhere—not exactly because you were afraid, but because of—of something else in you which I can never understand, not quite, though I all but understand it. Besides, I feel as if I should have known if you had taken so bold a step, however far away you were. I do not *feel* it to be true. Yet I believe—I know—that your heart is with us; and where the heart is, there will all the rest be some day also, or else your whole being will always suffer because it is divided. This is true always, always—there is no peace where there is division. Father Gerard said last Sunday that the Catholic Church is the City of Peace, because in it the heart, and the reason, and the body of man are united in a common satisfaction and content. “A great and firm answer is given to the questioning reason; the heart is filled with the love of God, and Jesus Christ, and the Virgin, and the saints

and angels, and the blessed dead; and the body is satisfied in its need of adoration, and by the sacrament." That is what he said, and I know that if I were purer, and wiser, and nobler, I should find it to be true. I do so find it sometimes in my better moments; but then again the curtain falls between me and heaven, and my heart is again wandering on earth, and seeking for better human consolations than I possess. It is only the pure in heart who see God. If one does not see Him, or only occasionally and fitfully, one may know one is not pure in heart; but, oh! how difficult it is to tear oneself away from the hope of earthly joys, and from the desire, so strong in us poor women, to be *the* happiness of some one person here. This will show you that it is not enough to be a Catholic in order to be happy and resigned; though I think that if I had been brought up a Protestant, I should have *died* of vain desire. Should I like you more, if you really were a Catholic? I do not know. Could I like you more, or less, for *any* reason? I think not—would that I could! Do you remember a day when we talked of the Catholic religion?



It was in October, by the side of the low wall along the road through the Upper Park. We stopped and leaned upon it, and looked down the steep bank to the stream. All the trees wore such glorious autumn colours, and there was a sadness—a bright sadness—in the air. You kissed my hand at last, and smiled, and said, “Do not you become a Protestant, at all events; that would indeed destroy my religion.” Do you remember that, Bertram, and how a wood-pigeon flew close to us that moment, and saw us, and suddenly changed its flight to the left? Why do moments, scenes, looks, the touch of a hand, live in the soul? It seems as if, when you are there, I live more intensely, and as if that intenser life lives on a life of its own, in the dull uncoloured existence after you are gone. I should disguise all this from you, I know, but it is too late to do that. You know too well what you are to me. One’s real self is hemmed in all round. With you alone I speak all the truth, yet not all. This is a burden to you; I often feel it so, but it is on you—you took it upon you; you must not throw it off. Where are you? What are you doing? Why do you not

write more often? I was riding yesterday, all alone, down that glade, as you called it, where we rode that day. *Then* the leaves were all fading and falling, yet I was happy in a way. *Yesterday* they were all green and growing, yet I was sad, mortally sad. Can you explain this? How it pierces to one's very heart, a place where one has been with a friend, and then comes to alone! That is the lot of women. They stay in places and brood over these changes; while men roam over the world and see new places and faces, and forget or half forget.

At last, at last, spring has brought some green to this desolate country. The beeches which grow in the park and in hollows of the moors are all dressed in their bright spring frocks—but oh! how I often long for the South, with a Northern longing. You are somewhere in Italy, somewhere in Tuscany perhaps, where the cypresses on the ridges stand up against the pure translucent evening sky, and red roses perhaps already shine over the walls of the paths that run among the vineyards, and the deep bells of the lovely churches sound the Angelus. Surely true religion must flourish best in a

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Southern country. Are they not nearer there to the spiritual sun, as they are to the material? Could the Christian religion have first arisen in Northumberland? Cold morality may be a natural product of the North, but not ardent charity, and the fire of love for God and man; and it is not the religion of the North which will ever content you and your Southern nature.

We had some people here last week, and I heard much talk around me about this report of your conversion. They all believed it, except Father Gerard; I don't think that he did. You are so well known that they think that your conversion will produce an effect in the social world, especially as some people have thought you a free-thinker, and they are exultant accordingly.

Now they are all gone, and my husband has gone to London for a week, and I am quite alone here, except for the little child. I take long dreamy rides, and sit on the terrace, out of the wind, and by the fire in the evening, and try to read, and I think and think, and I remember and imagine. Write soon; it calms

and pacifies me to have a letter from you, my friend—alas! too much my friend.

MARY.

When Bertram Bevor had finished reading these letters, and others less important, he sat for a while in meditation. At last he rose, went to the writing-table, and began the following letter to the Editor of the *Times* :—

HOTEL DI ROMA,  
FLORENCE.

SIR,

I beg that you will insert a contradiction to the statement contained in your issue of the 12th inst., that I had——

Here the fit of meditation returned, and suspended his pen. "Suppose that I don't contradict it," he thought. He felt horribly depressed, and resolved to go out into the sunshine. He went through the streets, and across the bridge to the Boboli Gardens, where he long sat and thought; then up to San Miniato, where he leaned

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on the low wall and looked down over Florence, and remained there till the deep Angelus bells were answering each other across the valley, and the sun went down behind the hills. As he leant there and gazed, the sky and mountains, and the rich valley, and the ancient domes and towers of the lovely Tuscan city, seemed to melt into a singular unity with his own dreaming soul and with each other. And at the same moment he seemed to feel the clash of vast contending spiritual armies, a battle swaying hither and thither through the ages, past, present, and future. And then again the external vision almost passed from his eyes, so strongly did the internal vision arise of a Northern castle, amid the wild, fruitless moorlands, and a lonely beautiful woman. The cool dusk came on apace, the rich lights faded in the west, and a strain of music which had for some time floated across from a neighbouring villa, mingling in his dream, abruptly ceased. This awoke him from his trance; he left the terrace and descended to the town, returned to his hotel, dined, and afterwards

wrote a letter to one of his correspondents, Gerald Beechcroft. It was as follows :—

FLORENCE,

6th May 1896.

No, my dear Beechcroft, it is not true that I have become a Roman Catholic. That erroneous report in the *Times* will give me much trouble, yet can I almost be glad of it, since it has been the cause of my receiving your most interesting letter. I thank you sincerely for your confidence, and will endeavour to reciprocate it. Many years have passed, it is true, since we looked at each other from opposite sides of Eton College Chapel, or across dim-lit St. George's. We have met rather rarely, yet have I ever felt a singular attraction towards you. It has often seemed to me that we were moving on the same line or parallel lines, therefore your letter alarmed me. It seemed to foretell my own future state of mind. For I do not, as you imagine, precede you on the road to Rome. It is you who are in advance, almost at the gate of the Eternal City, I should say.

When, in the same year, we left Eton, you

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went to Cambridge, I to Oxford. You seem to have lived there with men who freely, fully, and energetically discussed all things. You were one of the "Cambridge Apostles," were you not? At Oxford I too knew men in the intellectual world of that place. But the Oxford tone, at least that of my set, was not energetic. We made, or thought that we made, brilliant epigrams and paradoxes, avoided sustained argument, conversed in a refined but restless way, much as one does at London dinner-tables. Oxford, I think, was still suffering from the lassitude which followed the ecclesiastical movement in the thirties and forties. There was no keenness except about politics and economics, and they were not in my line. At Oxford I neither believed nor disbelieved in Christian doctrine; I did not, like you, imagine myself a free-thinker. I went constantly to college chapels, especially to Magdalen. Do you know Magdalen Chapel? I used to visit Walter Pater, who wrote "Marius the Epicurean." A dreamy atmosphere of ancient art blended with Christian mysticism floated round him. He was himself an Epicurean, and in his later years a kind of Christian Epicurean.

Oxford carries with it, more than Cambridge I should say, the feeling of a great past; it is haunted by the ghost of the Middle Ages. My mother had so brought me up, feeding me on romances and ancient chronicles, that I could never, nor can even now when I have seen so many statesmen, imagine that the men of the present, or the things, were so great as those of the past. Oxford, in its way, strengthened these impressions. And in the matter of religion I cannot believe that the ideas of the men who built Lincoln and Canterbury, Winchester and Westminster Abbey, were not loftier, wider, and nearer to the heart of the mystery, than have been those of the last three or four centuries. It was, at any rate, the English "age of Pericles" when these things were done. I read history at Oxford. It has since, in the form of letters and memoirs, remained a favourite study of mine, though of late years I have taken to other reading. Most of my Oxford acquaintance were men who, under the excellent worldly advice of the Master of Balliol, took keenly to the world of action, and have distinguished themselves therein more than I have. I could never take it sufficiently



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seriously. One of them is now Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and aspires to be, and will be, Viceroy of India. Do you know him? He had from the first a splendid grip upon the concrete, with a touch of the ideal also. Another Balliol contemporary rules over South Africa, another sways the destinies of East Africa, another is Secretary of Legation in Persia, another guides finance in Egypt. They have all willed to succeed, and have succeeded in life better than I have. All this you will think is not to the point. Nor is it, but I feel a reluctance to approach the main matter of this letter.

When I left Oxford I went, as you know, into the Foreign Office, and shortly afterwards passed into the Diplomatic Service. While you were learning the vanity of things in the House of Commons, I was receiving still more striking lessons in the same subject at Paris, Washington, and finally at Rome. Nothing like diplomacy for inspiring a mild cynicism and genial toleration of the frailties of mankind and womankind. At Paris my heart, still fresh, was broken for the first time, and has never since been able to present a strong front to the invader. At

Washington I found myself amid the most materialised society which the world has to show. There you see the *débâcle* of Puritanism, a far more serious affair than corruptions of Catholicism, because it is irremediable. The Catholic Church remains always there, a father's house for prodigal children; but once the belief in the Book is gone, to what shall Puritans return? One might say also that the Americans have been so long engaged in the tough struggle to subdue the wild nature of a continent that their own souls have become deeply steeped and immersed in matter. Nothing will save them except Catholicism, or a new religion. I can conceive of no soil in which a seed of Eastern thought might grow and spread more rapidly. In the United States there is no national Church, with its roots deep in the history and character of the nation, to resist a mighty foreign invader. America might be Catholic, or something else, long before any great change took place in England.

I spent my last two years of the Service at Rome. Delightful years they were. I occupied my time in study of art and history. But never was I further from inclinations towards

the Church which has its visible centre at Rome. There one is too near to the skeleton, the business and mundane side, of the great International Association. Close to its centre I felt repelled, just as I have felt most attracted at some distant place in its circumference, when, for instance, I heard Benediction chanted on a wild autumn evening at a Franciscan convent in the dreary Scottish Highlands. Perhaps I was never further in heart from Rome than when at Rome. It may partly be the effect of the atmosphere of ancient thought, art, and history, the pre-Christian spirit, that haunts the City of the Popes.

About the same time that you married and settled down at Estling, my father died, and I came into possession of Denham Court. I was tired of foreign life, and felt no diplomatic ambition. I left the Service. Since then I have lived partly in London, partly at Denham. I have spent my time in visiting, reading, hunting, farming, shooting, local business, golf, and so forth, and, on the whole, have wasted it less, I think, and even done more good with it, than when I served her Majesty. Both before and

after my resignation I have felt as though occupation of all kinds, whether that which men call work, or whether that which they call amusement, was but a means of staving off the necessity of a great decision and choice which must some day be made. You tell me that I ought to be married. It is true. Why I am not married is too long a story, and too depressing to myself, to set down. But when you express surprise that a happy marriage has not prevented your mind and heart from the quest of new adventures in the spiritual world, you forget this. Marriage frees a force which has previously been occupied in a direction which is closed by marriage—at least, by a satisfying marriage. Just so, when a man inherits a fortune, the force which has been occupied in bread-winning is set free and seeks other things, political power, say, or social honours. Then again—here I speak with diffidence—I should imagine that a happy marriage, proving as it does by vivid experience the increase of felicity through association and participation, strongly promotes those feelings which tend in the direction of intimate spiritual association. Now, when you married you had

virtually passed away from the Church of England (to which you had returned for a space on your way back from scepticism) by the road of mysticism. On your return to Western life, so full of the spirit of association, and your marriage, mystic individualism no longer satisfied you. Yet you could not return thence to the Church of England. Therefore the tendency towards associative life—quickened in you, as I think, by your happy marriage—leads you in the direction of the Roman Catholic Church, the greatest unity. At the same time, the fact of your marriage does no doubt make it more difficult for you to become a Roman Catholic. Your steps now affect others beside yourself, your wife and children, and your children's children perhaps. Your account of your mental history recalls to me a remark made by De Tocqueville in his book about democracy in America. The exact words I forget, but it is to the effect that men in our time are naturally little disposed to believe, but that, as soon as they have a sentiment of religion, they also find in themselves a hidden instinct which pushes them unconsciously towards Catholicism. This, I think, is true. It is why the

old Evangelical was the basis of the modern Anglo - Catholic school. At a certain point the instinct manifests itself in repulsion from Catholicism. This happens when the resistance to the attraction is greater than the attraction. At another point, which most men strongly educated as Protestants or Liberals never reach before they die, the attraction becomes greater than the resistance. That is where you are. So also am I on that side of the mid-line, but much less far. My life abroad did inspire me with cosmopolitan feelings, and an aversion to the purely insular spirit. On some men, even upon some in the Diplomatic Service, life in foreign lands has precisely the opposite effect: they become more insular, and disdainful of the foreigner. Here again I trace the influence of my mother. She was an ardent lover of the best foreign literature, French, Italian, and German. She read immensely; but the circumstances of her life almost entirely prevented her from travelling—my father detested the idea of leaving England even for a month. I think that she inspired me before I was born with a desire for Italy and a love of France. Certainly

she taught me when I was a child to value these other ancient countries as much as my own. Now the least universal institution in Europe is the Church of England, and the most universal is the Church of Rome, hence the latter ever had the greater attraction of the two for me. It satisfied best my historic sense, because it unites living men through the same forms with those of past ages; it satisfied best my European feeling, because it unites the races of the old divisions of Western civilisation. Thus the Roman Church pleased me for precisely those reasons on account of which it fails to please men of the more usual English temperament. This racial temperament, always there, became dominant at the Reformation. There was at once a violent breach with the past, partly justified by much in the contents of the past, and with the rest of Europe, just as there subsequently was in France at the time of the Revolution.

While I lived abroad this feeling about the Roman Catholic Church was latent, not vividly felt. I was much detached from the Church of England, but then I had never felt as if I

really belonged to it. Who does? Englishmen feel that the Church of England belongs to them, not they to the Church of England. They think of it as an old house bequeathed to them by their ancestors, in which it pleases them to dwell. The difference between most Englishmen and myself was that I had more roving inclinations, and did not much care about living in the old family house. But the fact was, that during these days of my youth I did not feel, or felt on rare occasions, the need of religion. My heart and mind were filled by the pursuits and interests of the world of sight and ear and action. The difference between Churches presented itself to me as a matter falling within the intellectual category. My heart was elsewhere and otherwise engaged—"in full cry of affections quite astray," as George Herbert says in some poem. But now that I have lived longer, and have seen that all ends in vanity and disappointment, I am weary of these things.

All after pleasures as I rode one day,  
My horse and I, both tired body and mind,  
In full cry of affections quite astray.



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I too am tired. Shall I "take up in the first inn that I find"? Other events in my personal history during these last two or three years have made me desire to break the foolish or vicious circle in which we go round and round, and to enter upon the new life. As it were, the consciousness of a great impending change grows upon me. Now also I feel in an increasing degree the attraction undoubtedly emanating from the Roman Catholic Church. My innate temperament, my education in childhood, my subsequent life, all throw me open to their influence. Many of my best friends at home and abroad are Catholics. Like you I feel most at home in Catholic churches. Like you I most feel the need of them in London, far more than I ever did at Rome itself. I think that the immense extension of great cities during the century has had much to do with the Catholic reaction. The sorrow, and turmoil, and confusion of that life calls for a strong antidote of restoring peace, while at the same time the tyranny of public opinion is diminished there. Certainly that unconscious attraction towards Catholicism of

which De Tocqueville speaks, has, with me, risen into the sphere of consciousness. "But," said an "Anglo-Catholic" to me some time ago, "you will find, as we do, all the satisfaction which you require in that part of the Church of England which has restored the Catholic doctrines and rites, if only you will throw yourself into our religious life." Well, no, I could not myself find it there. I do not for a moment deny the sincerity, or the piety, or the excellence, or the good work of this party of clergy and laity. They are, perhaps, the best and ablest men in the Anglican Church at present. Yet I feel less at home among them than I do among the real Protestants. You know my cousin John Bevor? Well, when I hear him and his friends talk, I have a singular feeling of unreality. It is all quite real to them, but not to me. I quite understand the position of the old-fashioned strong Churchman who asserted that the Church of England was rightly reformed, but none the less Catholic by origin and nature, and who regarded the doctrines of transubstantiation, sacerdotal sacrifice, purgatory,

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penitence (*i.e.* confession and absolution) looked at as an *essential sacrament*, together with most of the Roman symbolical rites, as corruptions of primitive Christianity, so that until Rome gave up all this, no reunion with her was even thinkable. There is much to be said for that view. But I cannot well understand the position of the modern "Anglo-Catholic" who accepts, with some superficial distinctions, almost every Roman doctrine *except* the authority claimed by Rome. Even that claim some of them, like my friend St. Dunstan, accept in principle. The more timid among them misrepresent, as it seems to me, and explain away the Reformation settlement; the bolder throw it overboard altogether as bad in itself. They surely teach and act in a manner contrary to the spirit and intention of the Reformed Church of England. They hold, I know, that the doctrines contained in its authoritative documents, and confirmed by the practice of three centuries, are of no avail if and whenever they conflict with the doctrine and practice of the Universal Church. This doctrine and practice they gather from our own history

before the Reformation, and from the present doctrine and practice of the unreformed Churches of the world. They resemble a political party who should say that the rights of Monarchy depend upon an absolute principle, and that the prerogatives of the English Monarchy are rightfully those held by the English crown under the Tudors, whatever limitations may have been imposed upon it by the course of English history. Will the English nation ever accept the Anglo-Catholic view? I doubt it. The English have a certain respect for the Roman Church, but wish to keep their own quite distinct, in doctrine, ritual, and organisation. Meanwhile, although the Anglo-Catholic party is convinced and in earnest, their position in the Reformed Church of England is certainly unsatisfactory and equivocal. It seems to me that almost every serious objection—and the objections are very serious—to Roman Catholicism applies also to this Anglican section; while you do not get there the advantages of the Roman Church, unbroken continuity, universality, and definite authority. I am much attached to St. Dunstan, who has written to me apropos of this report, and I wish that I

could feel more sympathy with him. But if one is to be a Catholic at all, it hardly seems worth while to dwell in this dubious territory. I do not see that to do so is a duty for an independent layman. I have always preferred to live either in the centre of a great city or in the pure country, not in suburbs.

Now comes the most difficult part of my letter, and it is near midnight. Yet I must finish it, for nothing is such an obstacle to sleep as an unfinished letter on a matter of importance. If there should be anything misty about my conclusions, I hope that you will ascribe this, my dear Beechcroft, to the lateness of the hour.

In the first place, I, like you, can no longer dispense with a real religion, a religion having a soul clothed in a body. God is the end of every man's desire. In distress I have turned to Him, like the needle to the pole. "O Thou that hearest prayer, to Thee shall all flesh come." Like the Psalmist, I have thought less of God, and needed less His help, when life went well and gaily; yet even then I have remembered the days of distress and gloom, and thought that it would not be very noble conduct to turn to one in distress and think no more of him in prosperity.

Thus I believe in God, though I attempt no definition. In the second place, I feel the need of a body to this my religion; I need the assistance of temples, rites, doctrines, association with others in a common worship; I need consequently a deciding and governing authority to arrange all this. I find in the Church of Rome much that satisfies my reason. I find a strong deciding authority, a continuous and unbroken history, a far wider community with fellow human beings than any other Church can offer. Like you, I think that at best we can but see and express shadows of the actuality which lies behind the visible universe. Like you, I think that the Catholic Church best fulfils the great ends of religion, namely, association and common worship on the widest scale, continuity, assertion of the mysteries, maintenance of the direction of the heart towards the centre. On account of these benefits I might be able to overcome a repugnance which I feel to parts of the Roman system, especially to systematised "confession," and more reasonably, perhaps, to the whole practice of indulgences. I have seen the mischief of this on the Continent. As to history, it is impossible not

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to admit that at various epochs the ruling authorities of the Roman Church have fallen into a worldliness altogether contrary to the spirit of the Christian religion. I remember opening in some library a book by a very wild German mystic who wrote at the end of the sixteenth century. He said that there were certain merchants (the Roman priesthood he seemed to mean) who had discovered the Tree of Life, and sat below it, selling its fruit for their own profit to guileless and hungry searchers after heavenly food. The time came when certain men, indignant at this mercenary conduct, secured a cutting from the tree, and grafted it on to a stock (does he mean free reason or natural morality?) and planted it in the North, but that, on account of the cold winds and damp heavy soil, it has never flourished there like the original tree. What do you think of this parable? It certainly seems to apply to much of the mediæval miracle-mongering and soul-releasing business, and to the later Leo the Tenth and Tetzels, &c. O religion, what things have been done in thy name!

Almost one might say that, like its prototype

St. Peter, the See of Rome has denied Christ thrice before the cock crew twice, before the Reformation, and before the Revolution. Yet, like St. Peter, who wept bitterly, and was afterwards forgiven and thrice commissioned to feed the flock, Rome has always shown the power to return to the true order of ideas. Like him, too, the Church of Rome has ever been saved by her profound belief in the divine nature of Christ. She believes in that, and she believes in herself, her commission, and her destiny. Alone among Churches she claims the world as her kingdom. All this is very impressive, and, like the converted Jew in Boccaccio's story, I find it difficult to believe that without divine favour the See of Rome could have survived so much that is bad in its immensely long history.

If it were merely a matter of reason, I should, I think, join the Church of Rome, on the ground that, in spite of drawbacks, it would give me the chief things which I require. But I am alarmed by that very same natural attraction or drawing force of which you speak at the end of your letter. I have felt it also, though in a less degree than you, as if I were a piece of



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steel more remote than another from the magnet. I feel that, although, in fact, my reason might prefer the Church of Rome, it might not be reason but magnetic attraction that made me submit. You suggest the parallel with the attraction exercised by an earthly enchanter or lover; I find it difficult to distinguish.

Take the case of a woman married to a husband who does not inspire affection, with a child or two, let us say. She falls under the magnetic attraction of a lover; fights against it; after each struggle is drawn a little further. At last she is on the brink of complete surrender to the passion. If she yields she sacrifices much, or risks sacrificing much—home, social position, and the rest. But could she justify the step by pleading the immense attraction, and her sacrifice, and the coldness or stupidity of her husband, and the generous and intellectual character of her lover? In the ordinary sense of the word, *virtue* consists in resisting attraction and disregarding the reasonings in which the attractive force clothes itself. Is it so in the case of the attraction exercised by the Church of Rome?

Don't you think that all attraction is really one force working in different modes, whether as gravitation, or magnetism, or that which we call love, *i.e.*, attraction towards a person, or to an association, a collective person? I wish that some Isaac Newton would arise to state the law of spiritual gravitation and resistance. If I hold out my arm, then my will, a higher form of force, resists the attraction of gravitation, a lower form, one would imagine, which draws my arm downward. The fatigue is the pain resulting from the conflict of the two forces, or rather two modes of one force. After a time I long to let my arm fall, and to cease to resist the attractive force by my active force. Life itself consists in the resistance of the vital force to disintegrating attractive forces. All virtue seems to lie in resistance by the will to allurements to rest and enjoyment by the senses. All civilisation consists in resistance to the constant, immense attraction towards a simply natural life. Can we argue hence, like the true Puritan, that the duty of man, his "categorical imperative," is to resist, so far as consistent with existence, natural desires

—that all steps towards which one feels a strong heart-drawing are therefore dangerous? Is one bound rather to undergo the pain and fatigue of resisting attraction? The answer is, I suppose, that the reason of man, or his instinct, can instruct him whether the attraction is to the higher or to the lower part of his nature. Clearly one can distinguish between the attraction of a noble, spiritual, and intellectual person, and that of a mere instrument of carnal pleasure. But this undeniable attraction exercised by the great association called the Roman Catholic Church, what is it? To those who have felt it—I judge by their writings—it has usually seemed, when they yielded to it, an attraction towards the Divine Centre through an earthly medium. To those who have witnessed the effects without feeling the force of this drawing power, surrender to it has had the appearance of a fall from virtue into a lower spiritual condition under the influence of sensual emotions. Subjectively felt and objectively considered, the attraction appears in quite different ways. It is enough to give one pause. A rationalist friend of mine used to say that the influence of the Roman Catholic Church

reminded him of the invocation to the Moon, in "Hudibras." Do you remember the lines?

Queen of the Night, whose vast command  
Rules all the sea and half the land,  
And over moist and crazy brains  
In high spring-tides at midnight reigns !

He used to say that the madder and more unnerved the age, the greater would become that attractive power. Remember that I do not consider this difficulty to be a new one. It has existed in every stage of the growth of the central Christian religion. A cultivated and philosophical Roman in the second or third century must from time to time have seen one of his friends yield to the inexplicable attractive fascination of the superstitious Christian sect, and vanish from sight for all practical purposes of civic, social, and intellectual life. He must have thought that this mystery could only be accounted for by a species of lover's madness, such as that which occasionally made other men ruin themselves for unworthy women. And the perverted friend must himself have been aware that it was not his reason, but something

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analogous to the attraction of earthly things, which drew him down into the depths.

Some philosophers have thought that the impulse which draws a lover towards his beloved is really the "will-to-live" of the child whom they two alone can create, already breaking forth and acting. Might not the attraction which draws a man towards the founder of a religion, or towards a saint following in his footsteps, or towards a Church embodying his idea and spirit—might not this attraction be the "will-to-live" of the new spiritual life breaking forth and acting? I mean the life which would live and work in the visible world if the union between the individual soul and the saint or Church were once consummated. The new life in the soul would be the fruit of that union, and could not otherwise be born. "To be saved" means to be here and now in a certain frame and temper of soul, to have the indwelling spirit. You, for one, may be led towards the Roman Catholic Church by the instinct that there, and there alone, is the one Body by union with which the new life can be born in you or through you. Another man

may be drawn by the same infallible instinct towards the Quaker community. You, then, may be right to become a Catholic, and he, for precisely the same reason, may be right to become a Quaker. Nature (shall I call it?) may seek by different ways to maintain by means of each of you the true spiritual type of life, just as in the outer circles she maintains, by the attractions of different men and women towards each other, the true physical and intellectual type of life. A strong, masculine man is attracted by a soft, womanly woman, and she by him. Each seeks unconsciously, by instinct, to redress, in the child to come, his or her own excess. So, I suggest, persons in whom the intellectual, imaginative, or emotional sides of nature are in excess—the reasoning doubter, the poet, and the lover—may well be drawn towards the strong, solid, masculine, practical, resolute, will-directed Church of Rome. Things attract their contraries, for the benefit of the offspring of the union. Here, you see, is a foundation for tolerance in religion. This too would explain why it is so absolutely impossible, as the letters which I found waiting for me here

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show, for some persons even to understand the attraction of forms of religion for others.

Jesus Christ Himself—this has often struck me as remarkable—filled as He was with divine plenitude of power, said that He was *not* sent to all; that He was sent to the spiritually sick, not to the well; to call sinners and lost sheep, not the righteous, to repentance. The attraction in Him acted upon publicans and sinners, and frail, passionate Magdalenes; not at all, except by way of repulsion, upon the solid, virtuous Pharisees. They could not even understand His attractive power, and thought that He was deceiving the people by the aid of Beelzebub. Nor did the attraction of the early Church ever act much upon the Jews, nor, I take it, much upon what was left of that very imperial, masculine race the true Romans, who were in many respects so like the modern English. The attraction acted rather upon Greeks, Asiatics, slaves, women, barbarians, the simple, the passionate, the humble and weak, and sinners, not as a rule on the mighty and strong, or on the naturally well bred and virtuous.

What does faith mean in the Gospels? It

means the making a full surrender to the authoritative influence once felt, not in accepting a conclusion arrived at by reasoning. In the same way your friends, the mystics of all religions, have always felt that to abandon resistance and make entire surrender to the divine call was the true necessity for *them* if *they* were to achieve high spiritual life.

You will say that I am not defending very strongly my original thesis, that "virtue consists in resisting natural attraction"; nor am I. It is difficult to discern between that which we call virtue, and the self-pride and self-sufficiency which is most certainly condemned by the Christian religion. "*Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum;*" certainly this seems the Christian attitude for the soul of man. But perhaps there is, in these cloudy times, no full and certain light vouchsafed, and therefore we can, each of us, but "follow the gleam" that now shines for a moment within our hearts, and then again is lost.

You will think my letter wavering and irresolute—so it is; it is in this a faithful mirror of the age in which we live. Some men who



hate indecision, on account, perhaps, of a kind of weakness in themselves, take this side, others that, as their will or education inclines them. They choose out of history and existing facts all that which suits them, and resolutely shut their eyes to the reasonableness of opposite contentions, and to all that offends their prejudices, or runs contrary to their theory. It would be useful now, I think, if some one were to bring together in a book, as it were against their will, all these contending views, and place them, without any comment of his own, side by side in that narrow arena, so that men might see them all together. It is difficult for men to realise that their adversaries can be inspired by as sincere and ardent a belief as themselves.

Was it not Augustine who said that war is nothing but the means by which we arrive at a higher state of peace? Out of our discords, I firmly believe, a new harmony will arise. Centuries may indeed pass before all these evil humours burn themselves away; but at the end Christendom will be found purified, tranquil, sane, and bound together in a visible, living, and therefore organically united society. Neither doctrine

nor discipline will then retain their present exaggerated importance, because neither will be disputed; public worship will be of that kind which experience has already proved to be the most natural, because (as you so well say in your letter) most expressive of the heart turned towards God; and a common sacred language will, in the uniform, high, and solemn central rites of the Universal Church, bind all nations together, and unite the present with the past and the future, the living with the departed and with the yet unborn. Such is my prophecy. If, meanwhile, any man thinks that he may accelerate that day, and have some foretaste of it, by joining himself to the Church centred at Rome, such as it now is, as being certainly imperfect, and yet more than any other approaching to that ideal; and if he feels in himself a call and strong attraction, which is probably the drawing of his own special nature towards that which is for its spiritual good; and if, judging or condemning no man for doing otherwise, and feeling himself to be in peace and charity with all men, he can act without pride, or bitterness, or vanity, but in a spirit of profound humility—if all these con-

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ditions are fulfilled, I do not think that he would be wrong in taking the decisive step. The wrong thing might then be not to take it.

You and I, my dear Beechcroft, are Etonians, university men, men of the world. Our whole education and life has taught us, perhaps only too well, to avoid all expression of our feelings and ideas upon the deeper and more serious foundations of life. It is difficult to emancipate oneself from this reserve which becomes part of one's very nature, and I sometimes think that an upper-class Englishman's power of thinking and feeling languishes for want of expression. I have, possibly, in this letter used too much the language of levity or of superficial philosophy. But since I have come so far, I will now, for once, say that I do hold firmly to the belief that if we are willing to hear and obey, our actions are guided by the Divine Will which moves and actuates the whole universe. I cannot hesitate to accept the testimony of all those saints who have silenced the outer tumult and heard the voice of God. I believe that we have the power of hearing and obeying, or refusing to hear and obey. I believe that one soul is

directed by the Divine Will to take one path, and another soul to take another path, though the end or goal is the same for all. Just as in an army it might be the bounden duty of one soldier to perform, and equally the duty of another not to perform, a certain service, so in the Christian life it might, at a given point of time, be the duty of one man to take, and of another not to take, identically the same step. I cannot think that if a man desires ardently and constantly to know and do the will of God, and if he finds that when he has done his best to cleanse and purify his heart from evil passions and desire for vanities, he is still constantly led in the same direction, he will be wrong in believing that the guidance is divine. I myself am far from thinking that my heart is so pure that I can know for certain the will of God for me. It is my hope—alas! how often defeated by my frailty—that I may attain to a condition in which I shall be able to feel more confidence in my own spiritual instincts.

As for you, you must judge for yourself whether in your case all the necessary conditions are fulfilled. Although I believe chiefly

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in trusting to instinct or internal guidance when one can deem oneself truly broken in to the Divine hand, yet I suppose that external circumstances and events and signs must also be taken into account by one who contemplates a venture of faith. Whether, if a man has, like you, young children, he is justified in committing their future as well as his own, is indeed a question, and difficult. I say nothing as to that.

Well, my dear Beechcroft, I must now wish you good-night, for it is I don't know what hour in the morning, and the ink runs low in my travelling ink-pot. I am as tired of writing as you can possibly be, two days hence, of reading. I have a pile of other letters before me, all produced, like yours, by this vexatious report; they must be answered later on. It is really astonishing what different views can be taken of a single supposed action. With which platitude I must sign myself,—Ever yours,

BERTRAM BEVOR.

*December, 1898.*

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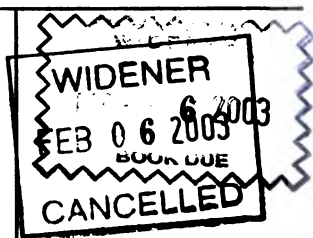




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